Canada's folk, roots and world music magazine

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Mavis
Staples
Joe Boyd
Martin
Carthy

Oh Susanna
Watermelon Slim
Seth Lakeman
Carolina Chocolate Drops
Jim Byrnes
Gordie Tentrees
Uishten
David Essig
Shtreiml
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Cover Feature

42 . . . Soul and gospel legend Mavis Staples recorded We'll Never Turn Back with Ry Cooder. The result is a powerful and emotional recording that confronts racism both past and present. The sordid aftermath of Hurricane Katrina provided the motivation.

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Quotable

"The black community is starting to look inward and go, 'Wait a minute, what is this [music] that we have discarded? Let's pick it up again and talk about what has gone on in the past here'."

- Carolina Chocolate Drops

"For me [Dave] Van Ronk had none of the lyricism of [Eric]Von Schmidt, and lacked his generosity of spirit. He was a hard-core Communist, drawn to the blues for its value as a political stance, rather than the beauty of the form."

- Joe Boyd

"Oh man, that was a great feeling. We were gospel singers. We never thought we'd be inducted into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame. I guess we had made our mark.

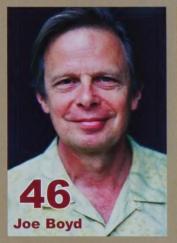
– Mavis Staples

Sheet Music

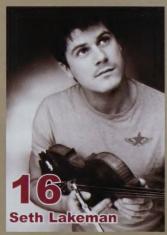
76.... Song: Bottle This! By Evalyn Parry

77.... Fiddle Tunes: Hommage à Paul Bacon and Le Rapide à Wilson, arranged by Pascal Gemme of Genticorum.











penduin edde

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album Penguin Eggs - a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes Penguin Eggs such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's Penguin Eggs is available through Topic Records.

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for the Arts

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Canadä



editorial

It never ceases to amuse me how every spring the national media suddenly become folk music experts overnight. Having generally ignored all things folk for months on end, out of the blue journalists confidently predict, out of hundreds of events, the one or two folk festivals not to miss during the summer season. Clairvoyance 101, of course, is mandatory for all first-year journalism students at the universities of Ryerson, Carleton and Western.

The Toronto media, of course, offer a great deal more consistency. They snub folk music on a year-round basis. And yet, last summer the great Globe and Mail sage, Robert Everett-Green, provided a rare prediction of biblical proportions. The Calgary Folk Music Festival, he wrote, would be "the seventh musical wonder of the world."

Now, I can report first hand the waters on the Bow River did not part to let Kris Kristofferson and Macy Gray onto Prince's Island Park, despite speculative reports around town. Still, it was all brilliant fun. As was Winnipeg, Edmonton, Canmore, Celtic Colours..

Unlike the ubiquitous Everett-Green, the local media here in Edmonton offer a universally limited folk festival focus. Obviously, the centre of attention lies with the big annual event in nearby Gallagher Park. Calgary, too, receives coverage. This spring, however, comparisons between the two turned a little nasty. A producer from CBC Radio wanted to know why Calgary had all the headliners and Edmonton had none.

"Oh my, my," I thought, "I've finally got Alzheimer's." I could have sworn Edmonton's artistic director Terry Wickham announced Michael Franti & Spearhead, Blue Rodeo, Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Nanci Griffith, Seth Lakeman ...

What the producer really meant was Edmonton didn't have recognizable names for an uninformed media to lazily latch onto - names like Joni Mitchell, Elvis Costello or Sinead O' Connor who had been booked in the past. The preposterous, overall implication being that Edmonton had a weak lineup. Rubbish.

The star performers booked for the larger festivals have little bearing on the overall success of these events. Experience has taught me well that the real hair-raising performances are more often found on small workshop stages by relative unknowns. Unlike the psychics of the fourth estate, Penguin Eggs has no crystal ball. So we'll be in the trenches all summer long, looking for all the great unsung talent we know exits out there. Standby for dispatches.

- By Roddy Campbell

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Observer (UK)



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WARNER MUSIC



ckua's top 20

Mavis Staples

Jeremy Fisher

Martin Sexton

Various Artists

Angelique Kidio

Various Artists Jesse Cook

Various Artists

Jools Holland

Ruthie Foster

Jorma Kaukonen Jim Bryson

Harry Manx & Kevin Breit

Doug Cox & Salil Bhatt

Patty Griffin

Neil Young

Cara Luft

Tinariwen

Eric Bibb

Foiet

2.

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8.

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10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16. 17.

18. 19.

20.

2.

8. 9. 10. The most-played folk, roots and world-discs on ckua radio – www.ckua.org – throughout April

We'll Never Turn Back	(Epitah)
Children Running Through	(ATO)
Goddbye Blue Monday	(Independent)
Seeds	(Outside)
The Reminder	(Arts & Crafts)
Live At Massey Hall	(Warners)
The Light Fantastic	(Black Hen)
Ammassakoul	(World Village
Stax 50th Anniversary	(Universal)
In Good We Trust	(Stony Plain)
Djin Djin	(Razor & Tie)
Rivers To Rails	(Independent)
Frontiers	(EMI)
Slide To Freedom	(Northern Blue
Diamond Days	(Telarc)
If You GotThe Do Re Mi	(Smithsonian)
Stars In My Crown	(Redhouse)
Where The Bungalows Roam	(Kelp)
Moving Out To The Country	(WEA)
The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster	(Blue Corn)

soundscapes' top 10

Compiled from March and April sales at Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1B3

Great Lake Swimmers	Ongiara	(Nettwerk
Neil Young	Live At Massey Hall	(Warners)
Lucinda Williams	West	(Universal
Amy Winehouse	Back To Back	(Universal
Various Artists	Stax 50th Anniversary	(Universal
Apostle of Hustle	National Anthem of Nowhere	(Art & Cra
Cat Power	The Greatest	(Matador)
Various Artists	Eccentric Soul	(Numero)
Tinariwen	Aman Iman	(Outside)
Bright Eyes	Cassadaga	(Outside)

highlife's top 15

Compiled from March and April sales at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC V5L 3X5

1.	Feist
2.	Vieux Farka Toure
3.	Arcade Fire
4.	Soul Jazz Orchestra
5.	Nickodemus
6.	Tinariwen
7.	Lucinda Williams
8.	Andy Palacio
9.	Mavis Staples
10.	Bebel Gilberto
11.	Wilco
12.	Ruthie Foster
13.	Ricardo Lemvo
14.	Michael Franti
15	Ft Gania Plant

۱		
	The Reminder	(Arts & Craft
	Vieux Farka Toure	(World Villag
	Neon Bible	(Merge)
	Freedom To Go Die	(Do Right)
	Endangered Species	(Eighteenth
	Aman Iman	(Outside)
	West	(Universal)
	Watina	(Cumbancha
	We'll Never Turn Back	(Epitah)
	Momento	(Six Degrees
	Sky Blue Sky	(Nonesuch)
	The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster	(Blue Corn)
	Isabela	(Mopiato)
	Yell Fire!	(Epitah)
	Bass Chalice	(Roir)

david essig's top 10

Hurt

Ry Cooder
Muddy Waters
Oliver Schroer
Dollar Brand
Hwang Byungki
Mississippi John
Campbell Brother
Willie P. Bennett

The Band

Neville Marriner

9.

10.

opining onlon
The Complete Studio
Pass Me Not
Hobo's Taunt
Music From The Big Pink
Beethoven Symphony No. 6

The Real Folk Blues

Anthem For The New Nations

Stewed Tomatoes

(Big Dog) (Denon) (Hwaeum-EMI) (Vangiuard) (Arhoolie) (Woodshed) (Capitol)

(Phillips)

(Reprise)

(MCA-Choce)

sillon's top 10

Compiled from March and April sales at Sillons Le Disquaire

- 2. Oios de Bruio
- 3. Les Charboniers de L'Enfer
- **Ibrahim Ferrer**
- 6. Tinariwen
- 7. Quadro Nuevo 8.
- Lucinda Williams Various Artists 9.
- 10. Bebel Gilberto
- Techari À la Grâce de Dieu Todavia (Justin Time) (Nonesuch) Aman Iman (Outside) Tango Bitter Sweet (Justin Time)

Babel Soundtrack (Concord) Momento (Six Degrees)

fred's top 10

War Brides

- Hey Rosetta
- 2. Shaye Lucinda Williams
- 3. Neil Young
- Amelia Curran
- 6. **Duane Andrews**
- Ry Cooder
- 8. Blair Harvey
- 9. Shanneyganock 10. Ed Kavanagh

(Sandbar)

Plan Your Escape Lake of Fire Live At Massey Hall (Warners)

Duane Andrews Buddy The Cat (Nonesuch) Gutterbeautted (independent) Fling Out THe Flag (independent) One Star Awake

ground floor top 10

- **Neil Young** Lucinda Williams
- 3. Ry Cooder 4. Rickie Lee Jones
- Vieux Farka Toure 5.
- 6. **African Guitar Summit**
- Jill Barber
- 8. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris All The Roadrunning

megatunes' top 10

10. **Tinariwen**

- Live At Massey Hall
- West **Buddy The Cat** (Nonesuch) The Sermon On Explosion Blvd (New West)
- Vieux Farka Toure African Guitar Summit 2
- For All Time
- (CBC Records) (Bauldelaire) (Mercury) (Stony Plain) (Outside)
- Corb Lund Hair In My Eyes... Aman Iman

Compiled from March and April sales at Megatu 10355 Whyte Ave. Edmonton. AB. T2T 0A2

- **Various Artists**
- Ry Cooder **Mavis Staples** 3.
- Lucinda Williams **David Bromberg** 5.
- 6. **Graham Parker**
- William Elliot Whitemore
- Various Artists
- John Wort Hannam Antibalas
- We'll Never Turn Back Try Me One More Time Don't Tell Columbus Song of the Blackbird Two Bit Suit

Rivers To Rails

Buddy The Cat

(Epitah) (Universal)

(Bloodshot)

(Southern) Beautiful Dreamers Vol 1. (Indelible)

Compiled from all March and April sales at Libral Martin Inc. 598 St-Viateur, Joliette, OC. J6F 3

librairie top 15

- Mes Aieux Les Charbonniers de l'enfer
- 3. **Boulerice & Demers**
- **Bernard Simard** La Part du quêteux
- 6. Isabelle Boulay Daniel Bélanger
- Zachary Richard Tricot Machine 9.
- Pascale Picard Band 10.
- Aline de Lima 11.
- 12. Intakto
- Various Artists 13.
- 14. Ceu 15. Intakto

- Tire-toi une buche
- Les Charbonniers de lenfer. . Un peu d'ci un peu d'ca Spectacle solo
- Ca l'air d'atler Retour à la sorce
- L'échec du matériel Lumiére dans le noir Tricot Machine
- Me, Myself and Us Arrebol
- Music From The Coffee Lands Todavia
- (Naive) (Putamayo) (Urban Jungle) (Justin Time)

(La Tribu)

(Independent)

(Milles-Pattes)

(Audiogram)

(Grosse Boîte)

(Musicor)

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News-Gossip-Rumour-Tattle



New York City's Museum of Modern Art will display Juno Award-winning graphic artist Michael Wrycraft's album cover design for Bruce Cockburn's 1999 release Breakfast in New Orleans Dinner in Timbuktu" as part of a year-long exhibit titled 50 Years of Helvetica.

Depeche Mode and Massive Attack are the only other two musical acts to have their album covers featured in the exhibit. "Christian Larsen, assistant curator of the museum's Architecture and Design wing contacted me to ask permission to feature the piece," says Michael, better known to



folk and roots musicians as A Man Called Wrycraft. "He explained that he noticed the Cockburn design upon its release in 1999 and had always loved its use of colour, texture and especially its use of the Helvetica letterform."

Helvetica is widely considered the official typeface of the 20th century and a favourite amongst graphic designers worldwide. The Cockburn cover joins an eclectic selection of international poster, publication and print designs from the past 50 years.

Michael has designed well over 300 album and poster designs for artists as diverse as Gordon Lightfoot, John Cage, Watermelon Slim, the Wailin' Jennys, Tom Paxton and David Francey. Wrycraft won a Juno for his cover design on Andy Stochansky's 2000 release Radiofusebox. The Helvetica exhibition runs until April 8, 2008. To view more of Michael Wrycraft's designs go to www.wrycraft.com.

* * *

The newly founded, Winnipeg-based, not for profit organization, Home Routes, will launch several national house concert circuits starting in September. The brainchild of former Winnipeg and Vancouver Folk Music Festival founder Mitch Podolak, it will offer travelling musicians consecutive gigs Monday to Thursday from a house registry that includes almost 50 homes located on the Prairies. Podolak secured funding for the project from CBC Radio, Canada Council for the Arts, and Manitoba Film and Sound. The CBC will record several shows from concerts that will take place between September and December and from February until April.

Home Routes' initial board includes such prominent figures as **Troy Greencorn** from the **Stan Rogers** Memorial Festival, **Chris White** from the Ottawa Folk Festival and **les siemieniuk** from the Calgary Folk Music Festival. "Home Routes is an organized approach to planning home-based shows that ensures a fun time for the presenter and the artist," says Podolak. "All things being perfect, we hope that it would work out to six shows per household – three in the fall and three in the winter.

Blackie & The Rodeo Kings will headline the annual Roots on the Rails cross-



country festival that takes place onboard a vintage stainless steel train – the last great long-distance streamline train still operating in North America – Nov. 9-13. The trip from Toronto to Vancouver will include three days and nights of open mics and workshops from each member of BARK, and onboard concerts every evening in an intimate performance car. The price, \$2,689 per person, includes accommodation and meals onboard, as well as a pre-trip show and night in Toronto at the Fairmont Royal York. Guest musicians will be added to the bill in the coming months.

Queens University awarded **Bruce Cock-burn** an honorary doctor of divinity at its Theological College Spring Convocation in Kingston, ON. Cockburn received his degree May 9 in recognition of his artistic, humanitarian and theological contributions to society. He addressed the assembly as part of the ceremony.

Singer-songwriter Connie Kaldor was made a member of the Order of Canada Feb. 21 for her achievements in folk music. The Order of Canada is the highest honour that Canada can give its citizens for outstanding lifetime achievement, merit or service. Kaldor founded her own independent record label, Coyote Entertainment, in 1981 and has released nine albums. She has won the Juno Award for best children's album three

News

times – 1989, 2004 and 2005 – though most of her music is for adults.

Cape Breton fiddler **Natalie MacMaster** finally had the same honour bestowed upon her May 5. MacMaster was named to the Order July 24, 2006. It was presnted to her by the Right Honourable **Michaëlle Jean**, Governor General of Canada, at a ceremony at Rideau Hall, Ottawa. The 34-year-old is one of the youngest Canadians ever to receive such an honour.

James Keelaghan and Oscar Lopez – collectively known as Compadres – spent the latter part of March recording their first album in 10 years. They recorded 12 tracks in 12 days and wrapped the project up on April 1. The new disc is a collection of mostly new tunes, with some reworkings of older songs from their solo careers over the past decade. Their only other release they called Celtino – a humorous hybrid of their Celtic and Latin influences. "We are thinking that this new CD might best be termed Instu-vocal or perhaps Vocumental Music," writes Keelaghan on his website.

Barra MacNeils Ryan and Boyd MacNeil will join the renowned Irish quartet The Chieftains for their upcoming June 1 to 12 tour of Japan. Keyboard player Ryan previously worked with The Chieftains on their extensive spring jaunt around the United States. The Barra MacNeils celebrate their 20th anniversary this year and have almost completed a new CD that will mark this career milestone. Plans are underway for the band to tour both North America and Europe.

The 2007 Juno Awards, held in Saskatoon, SK, March 30 to April 1, provided winners in the following categories: Roots & Traditional Album of the Year: Solo – Stephen

Fearing, Yellowjacket (True North); Roots and Traditional Album of the Year: Group – The McDades, Bloom, (Free Radio Records); Instrumental Album of the Year: Sisters Euclid, Run Neil Run, (Northern-Blues); Aboriginal Recording of the Year: Leela Gilday, Sedzé (Diva Sound); Blues Album of the Year: Jim Byrnes, House of Refuge (Black Hen); World Music Album of the Year: Lubo Alexandrov, Kaba Horo (Justin Time)

Christine Lavin hosted the second North American Folk Alliance Music Awards held at the 19th annual conference in Memphis, Feb. 21. It featured performances by Mamadou Diabate, Chris Smither and Madrigaia. The winners included: The Wailin' Jennys, Contemporary Release of the Year, Firecracker; Chris Smither, Song of the Year, Seems So Real; Bruce Springsteen, Traditional Release Of The Year, We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions; Odetta Traditional Artist of the Year; Chris Smither, Contemporary Artist of the Year; Crooked Still, Emerging Artist of the Year; and, Mamadou Diabate; World Music Artist of the Year.

Somalia-born, Toronto-based **K'naan** was voted Newcomer of the Year at the annual BBC 3 Radio Awards for World Music for his 2005 album *The Dusty Foot Philosopher:* Mali's **Ali Farka Toure's** 2006 release *Savane* – his last recording before his death in March 2006 – took Album of the Year honours. The Cultural Crossing Award went to **Maurice El Medioni and Roberto Rodriguez** (Algeria-France & Cuba-Us) for their disc *Descarga Oriental.*

International regional winners included: Africa: **Mahmoud Ahmed** (Ethiopia), Ethiopiques; Americas: **Gogol Bordello** (U.S.A.), Gypsy Punks: Underdog World Strike; Asia: Debashish Bhattacharya (India) 3:Calcutta Slide Guitar; Europe: Camille (France) Le Fill; Middle East & North Africa: Ghada Shbeir (Lebanon) Al Muwashahat.

Winners at the annual BBC Radio 2 Awards included: Best Album, Freedom Fields – Seth Lakeman; Folk singer of the Year – Seth Lakeman; Best Duo, Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick; Best Group – Bellowhead; Best Original Song – Daisy: Karine Polwart; Best Traditional Track – Barleycorn: Tim Van Eyken; Musician of the Year – Chris Thile; Horizon Award – Kris Drever; Best Live Act – Bellowhead; Lifetime Achievement Award – Pentangle; Lifetime Achievement Award – Danny Thompson; Good Tradition Award – Nic Jones, Audience vote – favourite folk track – Who Knows Where The Time Goes: Sandy Denny.

* * * The Calgary Folk Music Festival presents its second annual Folk Boot Camp July 25-27. It features six intensive workshops taught by musicians performing at the festival. The three-day sessions are geared towards musicians who have a basic grasp of their craft and want to improve their skills. Activities will also include afternoon lectures on Cuban music, bluegrass and the music industry. These lectures are also open to the public for \$20. Workshops include: Songwriting with Connie Kaldor and P.F. Sloan; Banjo with Chris Coole; Fiddle with John Showman; Acoustic Slide Guitar with Steve Dawson; Blues and Ragtime Guitar Essentials with Mary Flower; Cuban Music with Los Munequitos de Matanzas. For more information, contact artistmonkey@calgaryfolkfest.com







FROSTBITE music festival

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www.deeprootsmusic.ca

News



The WOMAD Foundation has organized its first Summer School, July 30 to Aug. 4 at Bath Spa University, Bath, England. It offers workshops in percussion, drums, strings, voice and songwriting. Courses cater for all ages and abilities. They include Drum Academy, led by legendary drummer Billy Cobham (USA); Patterns of Percussion explores the wealth of rhythms and techniques of Cuban, Indian and African percussion with such tutors as Johnny Kalsi (Afro-Celt Sound System); Striking A Chord highlights vocal techniques from Zimbabwe, Cameroon and the British Isles and features the likes of Cara Dillon (Ireland); Guitar Connections includes instruction from Tinariwen's Abdallah Ag Alhousseyni; Singer-Songwriter: Ireland's Andy White will host opportunities to write, discuss ideas, collaborate and perform. For more information, go to: www. womad.org/summerschool or www.igf.org. uk. Or e-mail: e.ginn@bathspa.ac.uk

Gibson Guitars now offers free online lessons for several musical genres that include blues, bluegrass, folk and world music. The lessons are geared for the beginner, intermediate and advanced musicians on a variety of acoustic instruments such as banjo, bass, drums, guitar and mandolin. Blues fans can learn from the masters: B.B. King and Hubert Sumlin. For more information, go to www.gibson.com.

The third annual Canadian Folk Music Awards will take place at the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, QC, Saturday, Dec. 1. Shelagh Rogers, host of CBC Radio One's Sounds Like Canada, and Benoit Bourque, accordion player with La Vent du Nord, will host this year's event. The submission deadline is now July 15, 2007. Canadian artists who have released recordings

between July 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007, are eligible to submit their work. Submission forms are available at www.canadianfolk-musicawards.ca.

The Ontario Council of Folk Festivals will hold its 21st annual conference in London. ON, at the London Conference Centre October 11-14th. The early-bird registration fee, good until July 31, is \$344.50 for nonmembers. Wristbands will be available for the public. The OCFF Board of Directors is looking for five new recruits who will stand for election at the conference. For more information, go to www.ocff.ca

Montreal acoustic guitarist Antoine Dufour will tour the U.K. next autumn as part of the prestigious International Guitar Night Festival. He will be joined by three of the world's foremost acoustic guitarists: festival founder Brian Gore of San Francisco, Italian-born Peppino D'Agostino, and Andrew White from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. The tour will be supported by a live recording released by Warner Bros Canada.

The 2006 bluegrass compilation North To Ontario earned Recording of the Year honours at the 28th annual Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards in Huntsville, ON, last November. The producer of that album, Tom McCreight, has now compiled a second volume set for release at the end of May. North To Ontario 2007 will largely feature original songs from both relatively new and

established performers such as The Good Brothers, Tannis Slimmon and Silverbirch. For more information, contact TJMc-Creight@aol.com.

After 15 years of playing primarily traditional music, the southern Ontario duo Brown Ale recorded Windsniffer and Other Assorted Legends — an album of original material inspired by the true story of Newfoundland farmer Lauchie McDougall who worked for 30 years for the Newfoundland Railway gauging wind conditions near Port Aux Basques using nothing but his nose. His reports determined whether it was safe for the trains to cross his area. Multi-instrumentalist Glenn McFarlane wrote the majority of this themed album that is set amongst the traditions of Cape Breton and Newfoundland. It is available at www.brownalemusic.ca.

A star-studded tribute album celebrating the songs of Ian Tyson is set for release in July on Stony Plain Records. The Gift: A Tribute To Ian Tyson will feature the likes of Gordon Lightfoot, Blue Rodeo, Jennifer Warnes, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Tom Russell, Corb Lund and former member of The Byrds, Chris Hillman. Fifteen tracks in all, it's the brainchild of Stony Plain owner Holger Petersen and Edmonton music journalist and broadcaster Peter North.

Tyson will receive an honorary doctor of letters degree at a ceremony at Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC, on June 7.



I am a DJ-I am what I play

Steve Fruitman presents Back to the Sugar Camp on CIUT 89.5 FM broadcast from the University of Toronto. Having started at the station in 1988 with the folk show The Great North Wind, he grew tired of the format by 1999 and came up with the concept for a different kind of show: Back To The Sugar Camp.

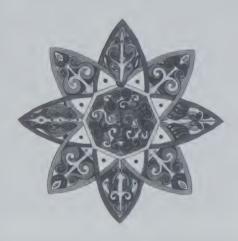
"I broadcast from a Sugar Shack. We have wolves, helicopters, a wood stove and train tracks running right beside the place," says Fruitman. Named after a Ward Allen fiddle tune, the program is mostly Canadian in content and context. It runs thematically at times but can also be free form. Fruitman often features guests who usually perform live. While folk music is still a major component of the program, '60s garage rock, blues, a little jazz, or country are also thrown



in. "Every week it's a totally different experience. And everything stops at the bottom of the hour for Stompin' Tom Time."

Back To The Sugar Camp airs Thursdays at 6 p.m. EST on CIUT 89.5FM. It can also be heard online at www.ciut.fm. Fruitman also podcasts from his web site; http://www. backtothesugarcamp.com/campstreams.

August 10 to 12, 2007 SEVEN Celtic NATION Celebration!



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"Quite possibly the best folk festival on the planet" Discover magazine Win a copy of Maria Muldaur's Naughty Bawdy & Blue or a John Prine T-Shirt





Maria Muldaur's latest release Naughty Bawdy & Blue pays tribute to such pioneering blues women as Victoria Spivey, Sippie Wallace and Ma Rainey and features such saucy songs as Early Every Morn, Handy Man and One Hour Mama. This is her third album in this series. The previous two - Sweet Lovin' Of Soul and Richland Woman Blues were nominated for Grammy Awards. And thanks to those nice people at Stony Plain Records, we have six copies of Naughty Bawdy & Blue to give away.

Not only that, but the very generous folks at Festival Distribution III gave us five fine John Prine t-shirts, which are also up for grabs. Prine, of course, has just followed up his Grammy Award-winning Fair & Square with Standard Songs For Average People - a laid back, fun-filled collaboration with 81 year old Mac Wiseman. Throughout his long and illustrious bluegrass career, Wiseman has sung with the likes of Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs and the Osborne Brothers.

So, to win one of these two prizes, all you have to do is answer the following questions correctly and e-mail your answers to penguineggscompetition@shaw.ca. Please put Prine & Muldaur in the subject line. And don't forget to include a postal mailing address so we can forward your prize. We will not attempt to contact anyone who fails to include this information.

Q. 1) Maria Muldaur's international charttopping album, Midnight At The Oasis, featured which renowned Alberta-based guitarist?

Q. 2) Which Canadian crooner played an important role in the discovery of John Prine?

Q. 3) One of Ma Rainey's more famous songs mentions part of her anatomy in the title, name that part?

The answers to the Great Big Sea DVDs are: Q 1: Tickle Cove Pond. Q 2: Bob Hallett. Q 3: Rankin Street.

Autographed copies of the DVD Courage and Patience and Grit are on their way to: Howard Shidlowsky, Evanston, IL; Brian Fitzgerald, Cochrane, AB; D'Arcy McGuire, Ottawa, ON; Pat Battles, Victoria, BC; Michael Carter, Nelson, BC; John McGovern, Birmingham, UK; Neil Foster, Los Angeles, CA; Ruth Bennett, Charlotteton, PEI; Jean Campbell. Calgary, AB; Phil Parker, Billings, MT.

Swansongs

Johnny Martyn 1934-2007

Johnny Martyn, who died March 19 in Vancouver, BC, was a founding member of the Vipers Skiffle Group, which became a vital steppingstone in the creation of Britain's rock'n'roll music. He was 72, writes Ken Hunt.

The singer and guitarist Johnny Martyn, sometimes Johnny Guitar, in actual fact John Martyn Booker, was actually born in London on July 16, 1934. But his mother packed him off to Canada when he was 16, his sister, Jackie, recalls, because he needed a fatherly authority in his life that his stepfather couldn't or wouldn't supply. Booker, though, made his way back to England in 1955.

By the following year he was in a loose circle of musical confederates who jammed or did turns at the Gyre and Gimbel, a London coffeehouse Martyn "sort of managed." With Jean van den Bosch, they set up the nucleus of what would become the Vipers Skiffle Group. The band came together properly when another guitarist, Wally Whyton, latched onto Martyn at the Breadbasket coffee bar. At one point during the 1956 Soho Fair, the busking duo of Martyn and Whyton took shelter from the rain in a coffee bar called the 2 I's in Soho. There they negotiated a residency and made it London's hottest scene. The group expanded into a fivepiece with Tony Tolhurst on bass, got filmed by the BBC - footage appeared in BBC 4's recent Folk Britannia series - and recorded for Parlophone with George Martin at Abbey Road Studio.

It led to an intense period of two years when the Vipers knocked out hit records such as Pick A Bale Of Cotton, Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O and The Cumberland Gap. Martyn was key to all this. The group's heyday lasted two years but its influence persists. The Vipers, like Lonnie Donegan, have a profound historical importance. They changed the face of British popular music because they were a counterblast to pap pop music of the Tin Pan Alley sort. They provided personnel - Jet Harris and Hank Marvin - for the band that became The Shadows. And John Martyn Booker, to reinstate his full name, was, as their joint lead singer with Wally Whyton, at the forefront of so much of this. Booker eventually returned to Canada, settled in Vancouver and became a social worker.

Joel Brodsky 1939-2007

During the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. photographer Joel Brodsky captured and created iconic images of American singers and musicians. Brodsky died in Stamford, CN,



March 1, writes Ken Hunt. Born in Brooklyn, NY, on Oct. 7, 1939, after studies and national service, he opened a photo studio in New York in 1966. He took the cover shot for Eric Andersen's 1966 Vanguard album Bout Changes and Things as a favour and, as a consequence, came to greater attention, doing photographic sessions for other labels and acts. Amongst his subjects in the folk and blues realms were Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Buddy Guy and Otis Spann. Brodsky had a keen sense of what to get out of photo shoots. This is particularly evident on Country Joe and The Fish's second album I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die, the carnival and freak show atmosphere of the Doors' Strange Days and Tom Waits lounging for Small Change. Van Morrison's Astral Weeks, MC5's Kick Out The Jams and Isaac Hayes's Black Moses were among his other commissions. Brodsky went on to work in advertising.

Carey Bell 1936-2007

Blues harmonica master Carey Bell died on May 6, 2007, of heart failure in Chicago, IL. He was 70, writes Roddy Campbell. Bell – the 1998 winner of the Blues Music Award for Traditional Male Artist of the Year – was a veteran of both Muddy Waters' and Willie Dixon's bands as well as an award-winning solo artist.

Born and raised in Macon, MS. Bell moved to Chicago in 1956 with his godfather, pianist Lovie Lee. Having taught himself the rudiments of harmonica, Bell had joined Lee's band at age 13 and once in the Windy City he took lessons from Little Walter. By the early '60s, gigs were drying up for harmonica players so Bell turned to the bass guitar and played in bands led by Honeyboy Edwards and, significantly, Big Walter Horton – one of the all-time great harmonica players and

Bell's acknowledged mentor.

Charlie Musselwhite helped sign him to Delmark Records in 1969. There he made his solo debut, Carey Bell's Blues Harp. Bell spent 1971 travelling and recording with Muddy Waters (The London Sessions). And Willie Dixon chose Bell for the featured role in his Chicago Blues All-Stars, with whom Bell worked regularly throughout the 1970s, and '80s both touring and recording. The Blues Music Award-winning Harp Attack saw him, in 1990, recording with harmonica giants James Cotton, Junior Wells and Billy Branch. Bell also won a Blues Music Award in 1997 for Good Luck Man (Traditional Album of the Year). He would record Second Nature in 2004 with his guitarist-vocalist son Lurrie Bell. Carey Bell fathered 15 children and is survived by 10.

Big Joe Duskin 1921-2007

Boogie piano pioneer Big Joe Duskin died at his home in Cincinnati, OH, May 6, of complications associated with diabetes. He was 86, writes Roddy Campbell. Born in Birmingham, AL, his big voice on blues boogie compositions and pop songs in the 1940s were standards on such tunes as Well. Well Baby and I Met a Girl Named Martha.

For years, he performed at clubs across the U.S., as well as the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and clubs in London, Berlin and Paris. He also was featured in a British documentary, *The History of Boogie Woogie*. After his father passed away in 1963, he took a 25-year layoff from his music. He eventually returned to his gospel roots on his final album, *Big Joe Jumps Again!* that included an appearance by rock guitarist Peter Frampton, released in 2005. In 2004, he was inducted into the Cincinnati Entertainment Awards Hall of Fame.



Shortcuts



Doug McArthur

By Patrick Langston

For most of us, Black Eyed Susan is a masterful ballad from an early Garnet Rogers album. So it's a bit of a surprise to hear Doug McArthur – who actually wrote this tragic love song about a sea captain's lady – give it a completely different rendering on his new album, Thunder Into Heaven.

"That was kind of what it sounded like in my head when I wrote it," he says, referring to the intense recording he made in concert at Hugh's Room in Toronto three years ago.

"I was looking to reclaim the song to someextent." In fact, four other songs on *Thunder Into Heaven* are a kind of reclamation. They were all recorded for *Smoke Road*, a 1993 McArthur album that was never released. Garnet Rogers' was supposed to produce it but walked out on the project after a week. (McArthur had toured with Stan and Garnet years before and subsequently recorded with Garnet).

"It was just two people who decided to go different ways," says McArthur. "It feels good to get those songs out," he adds, noting that *Smoke Road* lacked an initial focus.

That's not an issue with McArthur's new album – the London, Ontario-born songwriter's seventh release since his 1974 debut *Letters from the Coast* – and some of the credit for the focus and texture can go to lan Tamblyn. A neighbour of McArthur's in Chelsea, Quebec just north of Ottawa, Tamblyn produced the album's five new tracks including the gorgeous *The Trembline Bird*.

"That orchestration is pretty much his idea: the harmonium and he did that beautiful flute playing at the end. Once I heard everyone playing like that, I went, 'Oh, this has a weight to it that I really like.'"

Over the years, McArthur, now 61, was a paid member of the board of the Winnipeg Folk Festival, lived in California where he worked with the singer Jeffra (she appears on the new album), ran the Festival of Friends in Hamilton, ON, and has seen his songs recorded by not just Garnet Rogers but also Valdy and Kathy Mar, a U.S.-based science fiction folk music artist.

Remembering his days touring with Stan Rogers, he says, "I don't see anybody playing at that level now, having that impact."

www.dougmcarthur.ca

Jenn Grant

By Sandy MacDonald

Halifax is awash with rising young singers cutting their teeth in folky open mike shows and releasing polished albums of clever original songs, that are catching the ears of the rest of the country. The past year has brought new albums by Jill Barber, Rose Cousins, Amelia Curran, David Myles and Tanya Davis.

The latest and most anticipated comes from Jenn Grant, a gorgeous singer and powerful songwriter. Officially released on May 15, her debut, Orchestra For The Moon, with its lush instrumentation, dreamy folk-pop tunes and Grant's silky voice, has already found its way onto hip playlists and knowing radio stations across the country.

"I really wanted to have diversity on the album — some orchestral elements and some folk-rock stuff." explains Grant. " (But) we really wanted to make sure my voice was the leading instrument."

That shimmering voice had no problem holding up to the ambitious instrumentation—from the gentle sweep of pedal steel guitar to the swelling chords of vintage keyboards, warm horns and a string quartet. There's even harp, bass harmonica and an omnichord.

She also called on her close-knit Halifax musical community for vocals – Matt Mays, Jill Barber and Rose Cousins included. Ron Sexsmith guests on the lovely *In A Brown*



House, their supple voices melding like two rose vines in a sunny garden.

The PEI singer-songwriter has been living in Halifax for the past 12 years, studying painting at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, while writing and performing in the city's recentive acoustic clubs.

After graduating in April 2006 (her artwork graces the album's cover), Grant immediately started work on her album. A sometimesmember of the Halifax pop music collective Heavy Blinkers, she asked band members Jason MacIsaac and Dave Christensen to coproduce the disc. They also contribute the lion's share of the accompaniment.

Grant writes unburdened by musical theory: she often sketches unfamiliar chord fingerings in her songwriting journal to remember them. "So I write little pictures and symbols that mean something to me. I try to find those little chords in the songs. I know they're there somewhere, hiding."

All the beautiful textural arrangements are sympathetic settings for Grant's remarkable voice. "My voice is very elastic. People have to be aware of that when they play music with me," she smiles.

www.jenngrant.com

Winnipeg's Folk Music Retreat

By Roddy Campbell

Alice Cooper, hold your tongue. School's in this summer.

On the campus of the Canadian Mennonite University, the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival will hold its annual Folk Music Retreat. There, courses in songwriting, guitar, banjo and fiddle will be taught by the likes of James Keelaghan, Stephen Fearing, Christine Lavin, Bruce Molsky and Tim Sparks.

The festival, of course, also hosts a Young Performers Program for budding musicians and singers. And this year their mentors will include Leonard Podolak (The Dhuks), Jason Collett (Broken Social Scene), Jill Barber and Carolyn Mark.

Now in its seventh year, it attracts a lot of young talent. Past students include Wailin' Jennys, co-founder Cara Luft, The MacDades' Shannon Johnson, and the Canadian Folk Music Awards Young Performer of the Year, Sarah Burnell.

"I remember Sarah, all excited and saying to me, 'This is what I want to do with my life,'" says Winnipeg's Executive Director Trudy Schroeder

For the most part, contemporary Canadian folk festivals ignore the teaching aspect of what was once a cornerstone of such events. The daily workshops used to be exactly what they imply – an opportunity to teach

Christine Lavin at Winnipeg

and learn. Today's so-called workshops offer performances only.

Clearly, off site, changes are afoot. The Calgary Folk Music Festival, for instance, began its Folk Boot Camp last year. Goderich Celtic Festival also runs classes in conjunction with its annual hooley. In Winnipeg, the board sees teaching projects as an extention of its audience needs. Most of its audience camps in Birds Hill Park, easy walking distance from the mainstage. At night, the campsites are a hive of informal musical activity.

"We looked at our camp culture and realized how important music is to our audience," says Schroeder. "We wanted to build on that connection between our audience and professional musicians. One of the great things I find about the folk school, it is inspiring to empower people to make music."

www.winnipegfolkfestival.ca

David Ross Macdonald

By Tom Murray

Catching up with Australian David Ross Macdonald can be a bit of a problem. Forever on the road, juggling musical commitments that take him half a world away for a stadium tour, only to return for a night in a small folk club – he's a busy man. Between



drumming for The Waifs, and a hectic solo career, he's rarely ever at home.

"Since I don't have an apartment or house in Australia, I just come back to Edmonton and stay with my girlfriend," says Macdonald.

Even that just ends up being for a few days – a brief respite from a schedule that takes him and The Waifs across Australia with Keith Urban, and his own opening slots for The Bills later this summer, as well as performing at StanFest in Nova Scotia.

Being that he's usually found onstage or in the studio, it's a wonder that the man can get down to the basic work of writing new songs for the follow-up to 2006's *Knuckled Brass and Bone*, a muted acoustic affair that bedazzled listeners with thoughtful lyrics and nuanced guitar playing.

Even Macdonald admits that it's a bit of a problem, but he feels that when the time comes to record, so will the songs.

"I get a lot from the books I take with me.

I've been reading Ray Bradbury for the first time – I think in six months, I'll have plenty of material to work with.

"My favourite songwriters are novelistic," he explains. "The lyrics are cryptic, and they work allegories and phrases into their songs. They're not so easy to figure out."

The king of such writing would, of course, be Bob Dylan, who The Waifs opened for on

tours of Australia and the U.S. back in 2003. Many opening bands normally get nowhere near the folk-rock legend, but Macdonald and the rest of the rhythm section got a surprise at a casino gig.

"We were going over some vamp when the piano started playing along in a jagged and weird way – we looked to our right and there he was, the man himself. He snuck onstage and started jamming along to our sound check. I should've retired then."

www.davidrossmacdonald.com

Crowfoot

By Mary Beth Carty

The acoustic trio, Crowfoot, mixes oldtime, klezmer, Celtic, jazz, Quebecois and North Indian classical music.

"I had a grant to go to India, study flute and work on some compositions, some ra-

Shortcuts

gas," Nicholas Williams tells me. "But every time I sat down to write, a contra-dance tune came into my mind. It's interesting how playing for dances gets inside of you."

Many of the tunes on Crowfoot's second release, As the Crow Flies, were composed during this time – "quasi-Indian contradance tunes," Williams calls them.

Crowfoot are regulars on the American contra-dance scene, in itself an interesting cultural phenomenon.

"It taps into people with alternative, quasihippie lifestyles because it goes back to grassroots community building. In the last 20 or 30 years, it's really taken off in the States."

The members of Crowfoot met at a contradance festival in Boston.

"I was down playing with Tüq, and Adam and Jaige were playing with a band from Maine called Snapdragon. We ended up jamming, having a really good time."

When their respective bands dissolved,



Crowfoot was born. Violinist Jaige Trudell was born in Vermont and guitarist and singer Adam Broome in England.

"We're a tri-national band," Nicholas tells me. And while he calls Montreal home base, the others reside south of the border.

"Adam and Jaige live in a cabin in Maine with no running water or electricity. We're all hardy woods folk with a really close connection to nature—our music is inspired by that."

Delicate arrangements that express a variety of moods, three-part harmonies that blend beautifully, dynamic and passionate playing – Crowfoot's sound is unique and organic. As the Crow Flies was recorded live off the floor in Williams's parents' cottage near Ottawa.

"We stuffed pillows in the ceiling to make the acoustics work and had a friend come up and engineer. We wanted to let it breathe, to be representative of what we do live."



Dark tales from Dartmoor

Seth Lakeman's latest release, Freedom Fields, offers a litany of shipwrecks, pit disasters and murderous hares. It won Album of the Year at the recent BBC Folk Awards. Colin Irwin supplies the superlatives.

Irrepressibly affable and likeably down to earth, Seth Lakeman laughs loudly. And often. As well he might.

"It's mad," he says, reflecting on the crazy, irrational, wholly unpredictable turn of events that have so spectacularly transformed him from the forgotten violinist with former superbrats Equation to the U.K. folk scene's fastest rising superstar. "I never imagined anything like this could happen; how could I? It's ... well, mind-blowing. I mean, I never even considered myself a singer — I just put out a record to try and help me get gigs around the folk scene. I certainly didn't expect all ... this."

This, for Seth Lakeman, effectively started in his brother Sean's kitchen in 2004. They knocked out a bunch of songs Seth had written, based on the rich tapestry of legends and folklore stemming from the Devon countryside where he was born and raised, rustled up £300 to put them on to CD and pressed up 500 copies to flog at gigs.

Equation had already splintered into duos. Sean Lakeman had returned to the folk clubs

in a popular acoustic partnership with Kathryn Roberts, while third brother Sam Lakeman had established an impressive recording and live partnership with his wife, the winsome Northern Irish singer Cara Dillon. "I'm the one who didn't get the girl," laughs Seth.

Apart from helping to expand Cara Dillon's band with his flailing fiddle, Seth had released one modest homemade acoustic solo album of his own songs, *The Punch Bowl*, with negligible impact and couldn't see any reason why the next one, *Kitty Jay*, should be any different. If he recouped the £300 outlay and got a few gigs out of it, he'd be happy. It seemed somehow deliciously alternative to launch the album with a private gig for a captive audience who couldn't buy it—the inmates at Dartmoor Prison.

Yet a year later, the album was nominated for a Mercury Music Prize—the prestigious annual award honouring British music of all hues and varieties—and his world turned upside down. Seth turned up and met the press at the shortlist announcement, and in a stroke blew all the usual popular clichés and misconceptions surrounding folk music clean out of the water. Alongside the other nominees—including the likes of Coldplay, Kaiser Chiefs and Magic Numbers—he looked like the guy who'd come in to check the coats, but as soon as he started

playing his fiddle at that infectiously furious rate, the whole room was seduced. Their jaws were on the floor when he explained the true story of *Kitty Jay* and its roots in the legend of a serving girl impregnated by the lord of the manor's son who committed suicide when she was kicked out of the house and ostracized by the local community, and who wasn't even allowed the dignity of burial on consecrated land. He explained how her grave can still be found by the side of a small road in the misty wilds of Dartmoor, where fresh flowers are laid each day by persons unknown, presumed to be pixies.

From that point, everybody wanted to know Seth. Antony & The Johnsons won the Mercury Music Prize in 2005 but Seth Lakeman covered himself in glory wherever he went, not least when performing Kitty Jay in typically frenetic fashion at the finals at a swanky London hotel. Fiddle on his back, he skipped past all the technical crews, roadies, lighting engineers and hairdressers flanking the other acts, stepped on stage completely solo and blew the place apart. He's been doing similar things ever since.

By then he'd already recorded the follow-up to the Kitty Jay album – Freedom Fields – again in brother Sean's kitchen, again rich with West Country legends, and again made on a shoestring budget. But by now the gigs were getting bigger and the big, bad music world sat up and took notice. The major labels came sniffing and Seth eventually signed to Relentless, an offshoot of EMI, which souped up Freedom Fields into a more mainstream-savvy affair and reissued it.

There followed singles; daytime TV shows; videos; chart appearances; remixes; an all-singing, all-dancing website; a kiss on telly from Sharon Osbourne; a band; a comfy tour bus; and the type of high-powered promotion that normally sends us fleeing for the hills.

Some would say that constitutes a sell-out. Indeed, many people have said exactly that. But in whichever entertainingly surreal promotional situation his new masters dumped him. Seth talked passionately about his love for and debt to folk music and how much he owed to the colourful heritage of his beloved Dartmoor. "I did think about it for a long time before I signed," he says, "but things got very busy after Kitty Jay and I couldn't cope on my own. The deal gave me the chance to concentrate on the music."

He's philosophical and slightly rueful about the more extreme promotional demands of the new arrangement – the videos are particularly cringeworthy – but he considers the benefits far

outweigh the embarrassment, and he's genuinely humble about the chance to take his music beyond its normal folk habitat. "There's so much great music in the folk scene that deserves to be heard but never gets the chance. I've just been lucky."

His rapid journey from the backroom of small pubs to major concert halls hasn't been without controversy, of course. As with most specialist artists who achieve any measure of mainstream breakthrough, there are plenty of critics ready to snipe, but Lakeman's exciting, driven arrangements, evocative songs, relentlessly energetic performances and personable manner have achieved what many have tried and failed to do before him – introduce an entirely new, largely young, audience to folk music.

The sound may now be bigger, the shows grander, the band louder and the audiences noisier (a few squealing girls may even be heard at some of his gigs), but Seth still wanders onstage in casual T-shirt and jeans, with a loopy grin and a dazed expression.

He's 30 now and the mostly frustrating years signed to another major label during the '90s in the band Equation (with Kathryn Roberts, Cara Dillon, his two brothers and, initially, Kate Rusby) have left him under no illusions about the vagaries of the music industry.

"I know all this may not last, so I'm trying to make the most of it. A record company can get very excited about you one minute, and the next they won't even answer your calls. Trust me, I know. So I'm enjoying it while I can. The music's always the most important thing. It's not about money; music is my currency."

The album Freedom Fields, which takes its title from an area of Plymouth that was not only a major battlefield in the English Civil War but the name of the hospital where he was born, won the gong for best album at this year's BBC Folk Awards (he also won the award for Best Folk Singer). Like its predecessor, the album is full of weird characters and brutal stories of shipwrecks, pit disasters and murderous hares, all inspired by his immediate background.

"I feel blessed to have been brought up in such a beautiful part of the world as Devon. It still inspires me so much—it's a great place to write songs. I'm very proud of where I come from musically, too. My parents had a folk group, so it was always in my blood. I studied classical music and I use a lot of different influences, so I don't know if you can call what I do folk music. I don't even think about, I just do what comes naturally."



Homage To History

The Carolina Chocolate Drops are somewhat bemused by their meteoric rise from buskers to full-time musicians. They just wanted to play fiddle conventions, they tell Roddy Campbell.

Taj Mahal is a patient man. By all accounts, he waited decades for a band like the Carolina Chocolate Drops to revive the African-American, Piedmont string band tradition.

"He said he's been waiting for us for like 30 years," says Rhiannon Giddens. "That was one of the first things he said to us."

Mike and Peggy Seeger will probably tell you the same thing. Both have coached and encouraged Giddens (banjo, fiddle), Justin Robinson (fiddle, vocal) and Dom Flemons (guitar, jug, harmonica, vocals) in their efforts to revive an almost obsolete tradition.

Their progress is convincingly apparent, given their two delightfully rousing, standing-roomonly Folk Alliance showcases in Memphis in February. And somewhat startling, too, hearing these young African-Americans opening with the traditional Scottish fiddle tune Monymusk.

"There was such a large number of Highlanders who settled in the Cape Fear [NC] area," says Giddens. "There are lots of descriptions of slaves and free blacks playing Scottish music and speaking Gaelic. It really interested me and I wanted to pull it into the band to round us out. North Carolina was particularly culturally diverse. The mixtures of all the cultures produced the music. Wherever the connections can be found, we want to highlight them."

Named as a homage to the Tennessee Chocolate Drops – an early 1920s black string band – Giddens, Flemons and Sule Wilson (banjo, ukulele and percussion) first met at the Black Banjo Gathering on the campus of Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, in January 2005. They subsequently busked in the streets of Chapel Hill, NC, formed the Sanofka Strings, and recorded and mixed their debut, Colored Aristocracy, in two days in January 2006.

Now this is where the genealogy gets a bit tricky. Coinciding with the formation of the Strings, Giddens and Flemons met Justin Robinson. This trio formed the Carolina Chocolate Drops when Wilson left to teach in Arizona. While both bands co-existed for a while, the Strings would eventually fold into the Drops.

Significantly, Robinson introduced his new colleagues to Joe Thompson, one of the last old-time African-American fiddlers. Thompson would become their mentor and have a profound impact on the band.

"[Joe] is one of the reasons we are together. He is just an incredibly important part of musical and cultural history in our area. He welcomes us to play with him as much as we can. We play his tunes and he tells us stories.

"The thing about Joe is not his repertoire, it's his technique. And how unique it is, you know – the groove and right-hand bow technique is unreproducible."

Another two-day recording session in April 2006 and the Chocolate Drops emerged with their debut, *Dona Got A Ramblin'Mind* – a ragged yet thrilling set of traditional songs and



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tunes. Largely upbeat and impressively legitimate, it contains such familiar tracks as *Sally Ann, Short Life of Trouble, Dixie* and, er, one *Tom Dola* – of which an antiseptic version recorded by the Kingston Trio went to the top of the pop charts in 1958 and helped kick-start the urban folk revival.

"It's such a strong North Carolina tune," says Giddens. "Our philosophy is, if we can do something in a unique way, that's in our style, then we are going to do it. We are not going to worry about if it's been done a lot before. Dom putting that five-string banjo on it, and playing it with a slide, we felt we were pretty safe doing that.

"We're doing stuff that a string band from the '20s would have done. They would have done whatever they needed to do to play for whomever wanted them to play. That's how we're approaching it. We're putting it all in the mix. We're playing instruments that have a history and we're paying homage to history by playing in a style that suits them. We're not going to play Joe Thompson's music just like he played it. We're going to play it like how we play it to see what happens."

Two weeks after they made Dona Got A Ramblin' Mind independently, they met Tim Duffy – head of the Music Maker Relief Foundation, a label that financially assists regional roots musicians no longer capable of supporting themselves. Duffy would eventually become their manager.

"He said, 'Look, I'd really like to put your album out.' And he got in touch with Taj Mahal and told him about us. Taj had gotten *Colored Aristocracy* from another source. He was really excited about us and he said, 'Yeah, put these guys on the label.' He sits on the board of Music Maker.

"He's been really great. Letting us open for him, that was huge. We did five dates with him. We didn't know what a real tour was like. He's been a big supporter. He was waiting for other black people to pick this stuff up. There have been a few here and there but never a band like we are. That's the big difference with us."

For source material the Chocolate Drops rely on Dom Flemons's encyclopedic knowledge of old recordings. They've raided the Smithsonian and Alan Lomax collections and have dipped into Lomax's book. The American Folk Ballads. "There's a ton of black ballads in there."

They also visit who Giddens describes as "the elders that are still around." Joe Thompson, obviously. They've also visited Mike Seeger a couple of times. And from the singing of Sheila

K. Adams, Giddens picked up an impressive version of *Little Margaret* – an Appalachian descendant of *Little Musgrave (Matty Groves)* – an undeniable highlight on *Ramblin' Mind.*

"[Sheila] comes from a long line of ballad singers, actually. She's well respected. That's her version of *Little Margaret* I do. She's coached me on it and I was also coached by Peggy Seeger."

Renewed interest in old-time is all part of a back-to-basics movement in music – a rejection of "crappy, electronically based pop music" – says Giddens. The entertainment value also plays a factor as the Drops often play for contra dances attended by younger audiences. And then there's the cultural aspect.

"The black community is starting to look inward and go, 'Wait a minute, what is this stuff that we have discarded? Let's pick it up again and talk about what has gone on in the past here.'

"We feel more of a connection to our culture through the music. I understand more about what being a person of colour in the South was all about by learning through music."

From street buskers to leading lights on the folk festival circuit in just under two years, the spectacular rise of the Carolina Chocolate Drops has been as thrilling as it is impressive. Giddens is bemused by it all.

"We just started out wanting to play at fiddlers conventions and be a black band competing, and now we're full time."

The Carolina Chocolate Drops play both the Ottawa and Winnipeg Folk Music Festivals this summer.

A Novel Approach

Oh Susanna's Short Stories – her first recording in four years – presents a narrative full of memorable characters. Just don't mention Alice Munro. It's also her most acoustic album to date, she tells David McPherson.

With a voice that comes from the depths of despair and rises with one subtle song after another, like a bucket being slowly cranked up from a well, Suzie Ungerleider, aka Oh Susanna, surprises you with her powerful delivery – walloping you with its heartfelt honesty and vocal vignettes.

Like a cherished character created by a novelist's pen, whose tales you return to again and again, Oh Susanna's music is enchanting. After a four-year hiatus, she returns with *Short Stories*—her fifth recording in 10 years and first collection of new songs since the self-titled offering on Nettwerk in 2003.

During her time away from the studio and the road, the songwriter devoted herself to starting a



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family. She married musician Cam Giroux, who plays drums on her new disc, and gave birth to a son named Salvador.

All the songs on *Short Stories* were written before Salvador was born, so the songsmith is still unsure of how his arrival will impact her writing. She already knows, however, that becoming a mother has changed her perspective on her career, and on life.

"I don't know how it will affect the writing, but it definitely affects how you see yourself in the world," she explains. "It seems like a funny shift to go back to performing. It's good because before music was all-consuming and this makes you take a step back and see other things and relate to the world in a different way.

"I think it might relax me in terms of how I approach doing music in that not everything is riding on it... it takes the intensity off even though I still believe it should be an intense experience. I feel like I'm a worrier and this might make me go, 'This is not as important to worry about as other things.'"

She describes the new disc as her most acoustic record to date. That's not surprising when you see the A-list of roots performers that join her to help tell these tales – Bazil Donovan, Justin Rutledge, Luke Doucet and Burke Carroll. Ungerleider loves a good story and songs that sketch pictures of characters both real and imagined, so for her latest, more than ever, the American-born, Toronto-based songwriter offers 11 songs filled with memorable characters.

"I just started reading this Alice Munro book and I thought, 'How can I call my songs short stories, her stuff is so incredible? I was like, 'I'm glad I didn't read this before I named the record.'

"On this record it [short stories] became something I really wanted to emphasize and have people really hear because that's what they are and that's what Hove about other people's songs ... the feeling like I'm in a story and being able to live through the character."

A song that epitomizes this character-driven narrative is the epic *Miss Liberty*.

"It was the idea of the immigrant experience and the hope of new beginning and the illusion of going to the promised land," she says. "Because my family lived that in the late 1800s ... they came over from Europe and because pretty much everyone in North America has had that experience in the past, I just wanted to write about that kind of thing. I find it's a huge part of our history ... this idea of starting new and fresh. That's just the hopeful part. When I'm listening



to it there's all this hope and potential, but you can also imagine the illusions that this person has might drive them forward, but also might lead them to a big fall."

To add to the song's epic feeling, Ungerleider used a string arrangement by Kevin Fox to add to its atmosphere. This wasn't the first time she has used strings to back her voice, but she says it was the first time they were the central instrument guiding the song's journey.

Another standout track is the opening *Pretty Face*, which speaks of the beauty of a love that endures the test of time. "I was writing it looking ahead," Ungerleider says. "I had just been married for a few years and was thinking about longevity in relationships. I really based that song on my parents and my aunt and uncle who had this long love affair with their partners and I thought how rare and beautiful that was, so I wrote it with that in mind, but also hoping that would be something I would be able to achieve as well

"It's a couple of people's different stories, but it's not literal, I'm not telling exactly what happened with them, but just having them as characters in my head," she adds. "I'm thinking of the beginning, but also feeling like the beginning never left. They still feel young and vital because of this person that they've grown old with "

Speaking of characters, what would an Oh Susanna record be without paying homage to the godfather of modern folk, Bob Dylan. "I

guess I have a crush on him," she laughs.

This time out, Ungerleider tackles *Billy 4*, a song she admits she's been performing ever since she first started playing gigs back in the mid '90s, but she had never recorded it before.

"I'm drawn to the whole Billy the Kid story," she says. "He struck me as the kind of person who is betrayed and also lonely. There's something about him that is very haunting."

To promote *Short Stories*, Ungerleider will tour Canada and overseas where her record will be released by Rounder-Europe. Since she has only done about 10 gigs in the past few years, some of which were with other artists, you could say she's a little rusty, but she says that isn't a bad thing.

"Rusty can be great because there have been times when I know I'm doing a good show, but it's sort of like I'm so used to doing the songs that I'm not feeling them enough or I feel a bit strange about it. It begins this ritual that you do over and over again and you almost become detached if you do it a lot. That's what I like about taking a break and being able to come at it again. I might be rusty, but it's nice ... it makes for a different experience for me and for the audience.

"You realize that people don't mind mistakes and roughness to a degree if you can create some kind of magic in your performance, you can have rough edges and then it's almost better as the humanity of making a mistake brings you all together."







"Suzie Ungerleider (aka Oh Susanna) stacks all her albums with snapshots of lives from wild frontiers. Some are quiet, some are rough, but almost all are dark. The tales on Short Stories are more melancholy than menacing, offering new depth to her stunning vocals." - Maclean's

"...Short Stories possesses that American Gothic feel that her fans have grown to love. Her tales of love, loss and yearning are utterly engrossing and sung with a delivery that gives them weight beyond the words. This woman is a writer - she just happens to sing her stories rather than type them out." - 4/5, FFWD

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This Wheel's On Fire

Once a petty criminal with a mind fit for Mensa, Watermelon Slim now makes blues recordings that earn the same critical acclaim as those of Robert Cray and B.B. King, Patrick Langston has a quiet word.

Watermelon Slim is explaining why, despite two master's degrees, he couldn't land a teaching job a decade ago.

"Idon't have any front teeth," the 58-year-old bluesman growls by cellphone on his way to Tupelo, Mississippi. Rough living took them years ago.

A school superintendent told him to forget teaching. Asked how an employer has the right to deny an applicant because of teeth—or lack thereof—the self-described "overbearing, sweaty, occasionally smelly" Slim abruptly slips into formal legal cadence.

"Case law consistently upholds a prospective employer's right to deny someone employment based on appearance, unless that appearance is directly the result of another discriminatory category."

Slim breaks off for a moment to yell, "There's a smoky up there! Get in the other lane. Get in the other lane!" The driver is heard shouting something back and Slim is, for the moment, mollified.

The multi-faceted and mercurial Watermelon Slim is in the midst of a frantic summer tour schedule with his rocking band The Workers to promote his excellent new album, *The Wheel Man*.

Slim has also just finished a new DVD, which will mean six releases in six years. His 2005 album *Watermelon Slim & The Workers* ranked No. 1 in MOJO's 2006 Top 10 Blues CDs, and was nominated for six Blues Foundation awards. a feat previously restricted to the likes of B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Robert Cray. (None of the nominations, alas, translated into a win.)

Pulling off that many recording projects, never mind all the touring, means a lot of time together for Slim and his three-piece band.

Unfortunately, says Slim, he's a "mediocre" team player. "I'm a bull in a china shop."

To substantiate this claim of troublesome individuality, he hands the phone to his drummer, Michael Newbury, whose rhythmic edge on *The Wheel Man* might be traced to his earlier gig playing for the roots-rock outfit the Ban-Lons.

Says Newbury, "Slim has come from a different way of doing things and he's done an incredible job of adapting. He's hard on himself."



Born Bill Homans in Boston, Slim grew up in North Carolina listening to the blues singing of the family's maid. His father was an attorney and ex-freedom rider.

Although Slim later completed graduate studies in journalism and history, his first brush with post-secondary education was short-lived: in the early 1970s, he dropped out of college to ship off to Vietnam.

While there, he taught himself slide guitar on a five-dollar balsa wood cheapie using a pick cut from a coffee-can top and his Zippo lighter for a slide (he's since added a 13/16-inch spark plug socket to his arsenal of slides, and also plays a mean harp).

Slim returned from Vietnam an ardent antiwar activist with stories to tell.

In 1973, he released his debut album, Merry Airbrakes, the only known record by a veteran during the Vietnam War.

Country Joe McDonald later covered some of the album's protest tracks, but Slim's music career quickly tanked.

"The record industry did not want to invest in any more unproven commodities," he says, in part because the Arab oil embargo had resulted in a shortage of polyvinyl chloride, a key ingredient in record production.

"In the 1970s, I tried making a living in Europe with music, but I got my head knocked in," he says. "So I went back to blue-collar labourer, and frankly, petty crime, farming and various

things."

It was to be 30 years before Slim's next record.

Most of those three decades were spent working as a long-distance trucker hauling industrial waste, a career from which he finally retired in 2004. Many of his songs were born while he was behind the wheel. A stint on a watermelon farm led to his nickname.

"In my 30s and 40s, I was a stout man," the now-thinner, shambling Slim says, using the term "stout" to mean powerful. "I used to unload railroad cars by myself. I'd unload a 90,000-pound railway car in a 10-hour day."

One of his favourite jobs was at Junior Jackson's sawmill in Oklahoma. "I was off-bearer, the guy that stands in front of the main 52-inch buzz saw and catches the cross-ties and slabs and lumber. I did get the top of my finger taken off by the buzz saw."

During those years, he also attended university, married and had a daughter of whom he's immensely proud, and joined Mensa, which makes him a pretty smart guy.

"I got out of crime about 1978. Crime was for me education, and as the title song of the new record says, I spent years waiting for the deal to go down."

Slim also dedicated himself to music.

"At this point, I'm finally fairly competent in the slide guitar but I wasn't really someone who had the whole package together back then."





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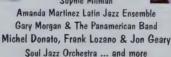
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During those years, he says, "I dove into life so deep, I don't care if I ever come up." A terrific and still-expanding collection of tunes is the result.

"I got three main things I sing about," he says. "Work, and I don't mean computer work, I mean hard work. Relationships, and I don't mean teenage angst. And death, my own mortality. I know I'm going to die. Robert Johnson knew he was going to die. It's like Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, you know: "The horror, the horror."

Slim actually suffered a near-fatal heart attack in 2002, and the recent spate of recordings comes from knowing that "I'm getting older and I may not be around that much longer and I've still got the physical energy to do it. I never run out of material. I live, therefore I experience, therefore I write."

Slim also worries, a lot, about an international conspiracy of neo-Nazis that extends into Canada via the Aryan Nations organization and includes some heavily armed groups in the United States. Neo-Nazis were behind the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168, he says. "Tim McVeigh was a willing pawn ... and we cannot trust our law enforcement and investigative bodies."

Slim made the bombing and conspiracy his master's thesis subject.

"I would quit my blues career in a hurry if I could get enough money to bust the ones that did the bombing."

Oud Have Thought

Montreal klezmer combo Shtreiml collaborated with Turkish-born oud player Ismail Fencioglu to create *Fenci's Blues*. Mary Beth Carty asks the million dollar question: two-step belly dancing, anyone?

I tried to picture how world-class harmonica player Jason Rosenblatt might feel walking by a busker strumming an acoustic guitar and blowing into an off-key harp. "I don't really mind that much. The only thing I really mind is when people ask, 'Can you play harmonica like Bob Dylan? Or Neil Young? Or Bruce Springstein?' And I think, 'I try not to!'."

Jason is a founding member of Montreal klezmer group Shtreiml, who have recently released their amazing third album, a collaboration with Turkish-born oud player, vocalist and choir director Ismail Fencioglu. Shtreiml and Mr. Fencioglu met when an organizer of the Festival du Monde Arabe contacted them in 2004 with an idea for a collaboration between Middle Eastern music and Jewish music from Eastern Europe.

"We were introduced and we hit it off right away. We hoped it would be more than just a special one-time event. Every concert since, Ismail has played with us, except the ones we've done in the United States—it was just too complicated for him to get a visa."

Ismail is more than just a special guest for the recording – he's an honorary band member.

As a culmination of two years of collaboration,

the group produced Fenci's Blues, which brings together the oud and the harmonica, two musical traditions, and original material that lends itself to the two styles. My favourite track, the Turkish traditional Beyoglunda Gezersin, features Ismail's rich, inimitable Mediterranean-style vocals and a blues harmonica solo—sounds like country music meets Arabia. Two-step belly dancing? You bet!

"We joke it's from the blue mountains of Turkey," Jason tells me. "Ismail's first instrument is mandolin. He plays the oud in a very non-traditional style—he really has a bluegrass sound when he's picking."

Whereas Ismail is a studied traditional musician who is happy to allow outside influences to creep in, Jason only learned to play traditional klezmer music late in life. Growing up, he sang liturgical music at the synagogue and took piano lessons, but his first influences came from American jazz, rock and blues.

When he started playing harmonica, his mother pulled out a Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee record, and when he started getting into electric blues, a Paul Butterfield Blues Band LP. Then he discovered John Popper of Blues Explosion, and former Flektones harmonica player Howard Levy.

"When I heard Howard Levy live I was totally blown away by what he was doing," Jason explains. "On the harmonica, he had the dexterity of a saxophone player. I arranged for a private lesson—it was only supposed to be an hour but it ended up being three hours long."

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Man and the



























Howard Levy is renowned as a harmonica pioneer. "A diatonic harmonica, a Marine Band, which is what I play, is like a piano with no black keys. But Howard had this confidence that the instrument did contain all the notes in the chromatic scale. Through trial and error, he developed the technique of playing it chromatically." Jason then received a Canada Council grant to go study with Howard for a month. Their friendship developed, and Howard came to play at Jason's wedding in 2004.

Which brings me to Rachel Lemisch—Shtreiml's trombone player and Jason's wife. As Jason sees it, having your partner in the band has only advantages. "When we're on the road we don't miss each other because we're together. And we don't fight over who's going to take the car when we need to go to practices." Rachel's Bulgar, a tune Jason composed for her, appears on Fenci's Blues.

Rachel and Jason, along with the other members of Shtreiml, met while attending KlezKanada one August. This amazing one-week program offers workshops in everything klezmer – a panoply of instruments, theatre, Hebrew – even mixing hip-hop with klezmer, a course offered by former Shtreiml accordionist and current hiphop sensation So Called.

"It's a blast," says Jason. "The jams last until four o'clock in the morning or sometimes later. Or earlier, depending on how you look at it."

People come from all over the world – as far away as Russia and Brazil – to study at the camp outside of Montreal, often on scholarships offered by KlezKanada.

Hearing him play traditional klezmer tunes on harmonica, KlezKanada-attendees started bugging Jason to start a band – nobody else was playing this style of music on the harmonica.

"We started playing in clubs in and around Montreal, and people started showing up—we were surprised! We played at a festival in Krakow, the Vienna Klezmer Festival, did a tour in Bulgaria for the Jewish communities there. We were very thankful that we had some touring success—we didn't make huge money but at least we were playing. There's not too many bands that get to do an all-expenses-paid tour in Europe their first or second year!"

KlezKanada kick-started not only Shtreiml but Jason's personal involvement with klezmer music. Before his experience there, Jason played covers with his McGill music program buddies, and joined popular Israeli folk-rock outfit The Moshav while living in Israel for four years. During his last year in Israel, he

Howard Levy is renowned as a harmonica studied at Remon University, an affiliate of Turkey, Serbia, Croatia, Albania—each of these coltumes have a version of this song with different cultures have a version of this song with different

"It was an unbelievable musical experience. The facilities were terrible – we were studying in the equivalent of trailers and every morning there was this donkey that would walk across campus. But the talent of the teachers and the students was really amazing."

While studying in Israel, Jason remarked that there was a schism between orthodox and secular Jews in Israel, especially among artists.

"I grew up orthodox — I was one of the few people at the university wearing a kippa on my head. So they didn't know how to relate to me. It sounds cheesy, but I guess that the music overcame that barrier."

One thing that struck me as I pondered the central theme of this album, the marriage of Arabic and Jewish sounds, was that, in a way, it is a uniquely Canadian production. Jason agrees.

"I don't think it could have been made in Turkey or Israel. First of all, we got phenomenal support from the Canada Council for the Arts to create this album. I have a lot of musician friends in New York, and there's no way they would have ever gotten the funds to create an album like this."

In searching for the connections between the two styles, Ismail and Shtreiml included a somewhat controversial traditional song as a hidden track – it has the same melody as Bony M's Rasputin, which is why I ask him about it.

"That song is common to very many cultures. In fact, it's the subject of a movie called Whose Song is This? where a woman from Bulgaria goes around to different parts of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Serbia, Croatia, Albania – each of these cultures have a version of this song with different lyrics. The lyrics are often indicative of what the societies are like. It's an interesting song – it's also sung as part of the Jewish liturgy. Ismail is convinced that it was written by a Jewish guy from Turkey, but if you tell a Greek person that, they'll freak out and say, 'No, it's a Greek song!'

On Death and Dying

Gordie Tentrees writes songs that draw from a turbulent past. "I have this knack for experiencing things people probably shouldn't experience," he tells Fish Griwkowsky

The idea of "write what you know" too often takes a backseat to "write what makes you money," especially in the world of commercially hopeful music.

Anything with a country flavour is the absolute worst for this. How many more manky-ass songs about the invented bravery of pretend soldiers or distastefully fabricated abused-wife tales shall we endure from the songwriter nests of Nashville? You know the type: the everyman songs that sound like, "She comes home from her shift-work job and he's yelling for dinner," with some mention of being a Vietnam vet. Ugh. Kill me, already. You guys aren't Bruce Springsteen.

Even folk writers striving to make a point aren't immune to the magnetization of unrooted tragedy. Narrative is one thing, but there's something sickeningly insincere about capitalizing on invented pain.

Gordie Tentrees, thankfully, takes a more di-



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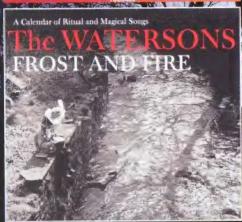
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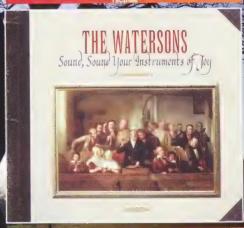
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rect route. "I've had the good fortune," he laughs, "to have had some really unfortunate shit happen to me."

For the record, the Whitehorse singer isn't a rain cloud – his handwritten folk-country songs range in theme and mood from devastating to hilarious. There is an eagerness in his lyrics, and especially stage personality, that might make you pick him first in a scrub-league ballgame, something working class without wearing a T-shirt boasting ... "working class."

Still, some of Tentrees's troubles started when he was growing up in rural Ontario. His best friend was shot to death outside another friend's house by that boy's father. It took Tentrees three years to finally finish *Death & Dust*.

"That was an intense time. I have this knack for experiencing things people probably shouldn't experience. I realized when I started writing that those were just the songs that were coming out. I really didn't have much choice because I didn't have much else to write about. What I admire in some of the artists I like, it's real stuff, you know? I can't really make it up — maybe someday I will, but why would you?

"That tune was about my friend getting killed when I was 22. He was a kid down the street. kind of an older brother. We both came from rough-and-tumble families without a lot of parental guidance. We got into all kinds of trouble, but he didn't get as many lucky breaks as I did. It could've been myself, but he just ended up in the wrong spot at the wrong time.

"It was quite a scene because he had gone to another friend's house to pick him up and the father was upset that day because his wife had left him. He'd been drinking. He was a local schoolteacher and came out and shot him and claimed to the police that he was defending his property. My friend didn't exactly have the greatest reputation, so as a schoolteacher everyone figured he'd get off. His wife and my other friend, his son, turned him in. He got put into jail for about a week and the papers said he was defending his property, but everyone knew it wasn't true. He got out a week later and went back to the same spot and shot himself."

Understandably, Tentrees's voice weakens a little telling this tale. "It was kind of a relief. I remember sitting with my friend's brothers as they were trying to figure out which one of them was going to make amends for their brother's death and kill the guy. I tried to convince them otherwise, but they didn't really care if they spent the rest of their lives in jail

to honour their brother."

But his album, *Bottleneck to Wire*, contains even more human nature to ponder.

On 2 Sons, the same number the singer has up in the Yukon with him, Tentrees explores the plight of a woman he saw on the news one day that kept haunting him.

"I was playing with my son during the Christmas holiday in a little cabin I'd rented in Ontario. I looked at the news and saw the tsunami in Asia. CNN was interviewing this woman shortly after she had to choose which one of her sons she would save. They asked her, to make a choice like that, what was she thinking?

"It really shook me up. When I came back to Whitehorse there was a tsunami benefit and I kept thinking of that woman." The strange places empathy takes us...

Tentrees grew up on a livestock and potato farm in Ontario. He went to university in Toronto and got an education degree, but decided to drive around the country for a while and soak up life.

"I ended up in the Yukon, got a job working in a bush camp. I drove back to Toronto, packed up all my stuff and drove back to Whitehorse in the middle of January. That was 10 years ago."

I ask him what he left behind. "Not much," he laughs. "I was just working to live there. Right now I'm in my yard looking at a mountain. Whitehorse has a little bit of every other part of Canada. Open prairies, mountains, the ocean's two hours southwest of here. The housing's going up, for sure, but gas is the same as Ontario.

"I got into music through my mother, who was piano and flute-playing. She'd hold all these soirees in my house and started a music café. She was a DJ, too, so I got thrown all kinds of folk music: Stan Rodgers, Gordon Lightfoot. Then I got into Willie P. Bennett and Fred Eaglesmith. She gave me a guitar and I let it be for a long time and didn't tell her.

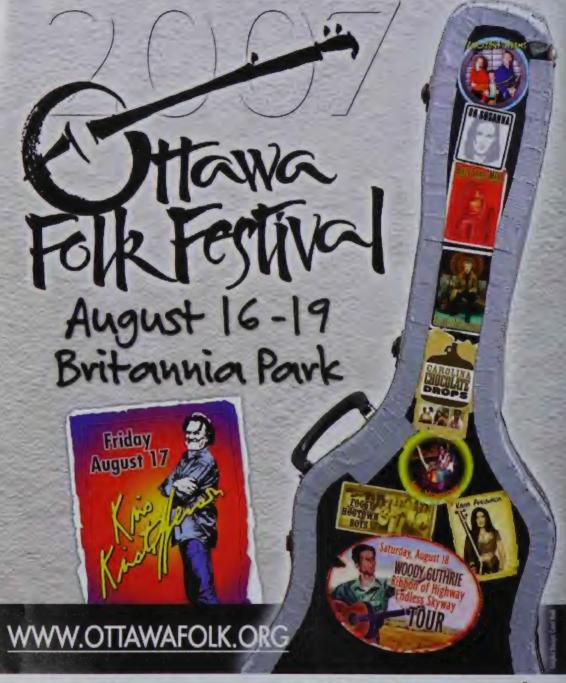
"But when I moved here, everyone around was playing music like crazy. But to fit in and have fun I learned guitar, and long story short ended up in a Fred Eaglesmith cover band."

There you have it – without Eaglesmith, we probably wouldn't have Tentrees!

"I've met him and told him I was a fan, but I didn't tell him about the band. It's kind of weird, you know?

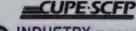
"But," he laughs, "I do hold him responsible."











ONTARIO Yours to discover



Gimme Shelter

Actor and blues belter Jim Byrnes gets back to basics with his award-winning recording *House of Refuge*. A grateful Tom Murray reckons it's a fresh breath of the eclectic St. Louis coffee houses of the '60s.

"Y'know, during the second-last conversation I had with Muddy Waters," muses Jim Byrnes over the phone from his home in Vancouver, "he told me about how he wanted to make a record like he did back

on the Stovall plantation back in 1941 – the one he did with (musicologist) Alan Lomax.

"For that first recording, he had Son Sims on fiddle and mandolin," Byrnes continues, "And there was a washtub bass as well. Muddy was like 'man, I want to play a show like that again. There's something about that music that speaks to me and I've gotten so far away from it."

This isn't a side of Waters that most people would think existed, but it's something that Byrnes can relate to as a musician long typecast as a straight blues singer, but with so much more to draw on. As a matter of fact, you could almost see a parallel between Waters's late-in-life desire to get back to his earliest roots and Byrnes's physical and musical journey that took him from his birthplace of St. Louis, MO, to Vancouver, BC, in the mid-'70s.

A melting pot of musical styles, St. Louis presented unlimited musical opportunities for the young Byrnes, who can recall coffeehouse shows that presented jazz, blues, poetry and whatever else happened to walk in the door. He was also able to see some of the greatest musicians of his time just by checking out clubs

around town, or sometimes right in his own neighbourhood.

"Albert King – the first time I saw him he was still a heavy equipment operator, he ran a backhoe and he'd play weekends. He played birthday parties," he says with a mixture of amusement and disbelief. "Albert King! There was a neighbourhood bar with a bowling alley and lounge attached, and Ike and Tina (Turner) were the house band."

This was before the assassination of Martin Luther King, with colour and class barriers dissolving as young musicians began crossing heedlessly between the two. In soul music you could see the new synthesis at work down south in Stax studios in Memphis, or the Muscle Shoals contingent at Fame studios.

"Look at Dan Penn and Spooner Oldham," adds Byrnes about the two Muscle Shoals songwriter-musicians. "They wrote some of the great soul tunes and they were hillbillies. There's so much about that music that crosses over. I mean it's countrified, and it's so soulful – but after the assassination paranoia came back and people strayed away. They're

Date Byrns

still trying, though – I was just back in St. Louis a while back, and my old friends are still living like it was back then."

The hoped-for death blow to racial animus through music was fleeting, but it marked Byrnes. He stayed the course, mixing odd jobs with occasional gigs, and drifted around the country. What might be thought of as the definitive moment in his young life – a sideswipe from a car in 1972 that resulted in the loss of both his legs – is really nothing more than a footnote. Since then he's been an actor (Highlander, Wiseguy, Higher Ground, Stargate Infinity) and a working musician, fronting his own band for the past

quarter century. He could've run down that groove forever if he wanted, cranking out the clichéd blues persona and the canon of expected songs but, like Muddy, he couldn't help thinking back to his past.

"For years I played bar-band blues," he sighs, "Because that's where the gigs were. But now I've gone back to the start, and who cares what people might think – I want to play a mess of the music that I love so much."

Thus we come to the genesis of Byrnes's Juno-award winning album of 2007, *House of Refuge*.

After a particularly exciting performance with gospel legends. The Soul Stirrers a few years back, Byrnes nurtured a desire to somehow get gospel into his own sound. "It was such a great show," he recalls. "We'd kept in touch since the gig, and [original singerguitarist] Arthur [Crume] and I had been e-mailing back and forth, trying to get it together."

Unfortunately, the logistics didn't pan out – with the Soul Stirrers split between Georgia and Florida, Byrnes and Black Hen working with a thrifty budget in Vancouver, it didn't seem as though collaboration would be possible.

"These guys are in their late 70s and early 80s, and the idea of us travelling there or us flying them here – it just couldn't be done."

Still afire with the desire to see the idea through, he phoned up his friend, Marcus Mosely, and asked him to help put together a group of singers. "That's how we got [singers] Will [Sanders] and Ronnie [Small], who with Marcus I dubbed the Sojourners, which I took from Sojourner Truth, the abolitionist."

Byrnes and the Sojourners – along with a band that included producermusician Steve Dawson, violinist Jesse Zubot and keyboardist Chris

Gestrin – recorded the *House of Refuge* in just four days.

"I'm just thrilled that people actually listened to it," says Byrnes about the album, his second to win Blues Album of the Year after 1997's *That River*. "There's so much music out there, and while I'm glad that we won I'm also glad people just paid attention to it."

It's a mixed bag that represents Byrnes's musical restlessness, throwing traditional numbers like *Didn't It Rain* against Skip James and Robert Johnson tunes, Byrnes originals like *The Death of Ernesto Guevara* rubbing up against Hoagy Carmichael's

Stardust and young Toronto alt-country singer Justin Rutledge's Lay Me Down Sweet Jesus. If it isn't quite like Muddy Waters's desire to revisit string music back on the plantation, it is a breath of the eclectic St. Louis coffeehouses of the '60s – and for that we should be grateful.

"One thing about Steve, Jesse and me is that we hate pigeonholing," Byrnes reflects. "There's a section of the blues world that thinks. 'Oh, if it wasn't recorded between such and such a time at so and so date in a particular place it's no good.' I hate that," he says. "I love bluegrass, old country, bebop, doo-wop, I love it all. I mean, I can look at some blues as almost like classical, but I don't want my music to be a museum piece."

Sassy Singers
In the spirit of Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer,

In the spirit of Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, the five women of Quebec's a cappella Galant Tu Perds Ton Temps draw on a song tradition full of hilarious, sexual innuendo. Tony Montague provides a keen ear.

It's just after 10:30 on Sunday morning, a time when most musicians are either sleeping off last night's fun or crawling across the floor for a jolt of caffeine. But at the Festival du Bois, in Coquitlam, BC, the party is already in full swing.

The sassy bonhomie and engaging verve of Galant Tu Perds Ton Temps's five female vocalists have made the vast marquee tent feel like a Quebecois village hall.

A song satirizing the dubious delights of marriage is followed by a lament for a husband so small that he disappeared in the sheets and got roasted when the bed caught fire. Then there's one about a randy priest given his comeuppance – verbally at least – by a cheeky girl. Galant breathes new life into women's songs from rural Quebec.

The a cappella group has attitude and a seductive swagger. Its name translates as "Loverboy, you're wasting your time", and to embody this the girls have a lone male in tow for their rhythm section. Jean-François Berthiaume may be the hardest-working accompanist in Canadian music. He performs a range of duties for Galant — step-dancing, drumming his feet on a plank of wood, pounding a bodhran with a stick, and rattling bones and spoons to drive the songs.

And the tasks of the hirsute hoofer don't stop there. "He carries all the bags for us, and at the same time he opens the doors," reveals Josianne Hébert, musical director and co-founder of Galant, speaking in French. "And, of course, he provides visual appeal. As a party trick, he plays the case in which he carries his clogs, and makes it sound like a snare drum. Jean-François's been with us four years, and we've got him well-trained by now," she says with a laugh.

Galant started out early in 2003 when Hébert and her longtime buddy, Mia Lacroix, decided it was time to undertake a music project together. "We were drawn to the folk tradition, and we noticed that there were very few women's groups around. So we thought it would be good to get one going."

"Although we're both instrumental musicians - Mia plays flute and I play

piano and accordion – we wanted it to be a cappella, not only because we love the human voice, but because that way the words stand out more clearly. There are so many great stories and so much fine poetry in those old songs."

Hébert and Lacroix, who sing soprano, soon enlisted three other girls they knew – Jacinthe Dubé (tenor), Evelyne Gélinas (alto), and Patricia Beausoleil (bass) – to create a full and many-textured sound. The quintet gathered every Sunday lunchtime in the kitchen to share songs that they knew and create harmonies and subtle arrangements for them.

Their focus in particular was on material for and by women, or seen chiefly from a female perspective. "Often these songs were neglected, or usually heard sung by men. We wanted to reappropriate them. In traditional society women would sing in their homes while they worked, weaving, cleaning, preparing meals, whatever. They rarely did so at gatherings – though they often supplied the words that the men forgot!"

At their weekly sessions, the girls had such a gas that they soon wanted to perform in public. "But we needed rhythmic accompaniment, and discovered it's not easy to tap your feet and sing at the same time! So that's when we brought in Jean-François."

Berthiaume had played with Quebecois bands Entourloupe and Réveillons!, and made several trips to Ireland to perfect his bodhran playing. His rhythmic finesse and agility as a step-dancer proved a brilliant addition to Galant.

In the summer of 2003, the new formation was the talk of the French-Canadian folk scene, especially after their appearance at the Mémoire et Racines festival in Lanaudière, the heartland of Quebecois traditional music.

"Actually we have no tradition here of country people singing in harmonies like we do, except in the churches. When they sang choruses for the old songs it was in unison. Then bands in the '70s like La Bottine Souriante started elaborating some of the vocal parts. Ten years ago, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer [a five-man a cappella group] was formed. Naturally we drew inspiration from them, and they've become good friends."

Galant's 2005 debut disc, the archly titled Fais-Toi Pas d'Illusions (Don't Kid Yourself) was produced by one of Les Charbonniers, André Marchand. The album's 19 songs range from a melancholy farewell to the single life, Adieu la Liberté, to the lively and comic fantasy Quand J'étais Fille à Marier in which the singer recalls entertaining "between 20 and 30" lovers in her room at midnight!

"Our repertoire comes from a variety



of sources – friends, old albums, archival researches, and our own families. My maternal grandmother, Évelina Provencher, knew a lot of songs, and in her youth she'd written down things that she'd heard her father and grandfather perform. She gave me her notebooks some years ago when I was 18 and she was getting on for 90."

Galant's songs can sound surprisingly modern. Maman J'ai 14 Ans is a dialogue between a young girl and her mother, in which the daughter reveals that she's taken a lover and has told the priest about it. When scolded, she accuses her mom of hypocrisy: "When you were 14 weren't you already seeing my father?" Whereas dad is a flirt, the precocious teenager has found a well-behaved guy, who talks to her "so politely he sounds like a school-teacher".

Other songs are less blatant but still simmer in double entendres, such as *Un Métier Pour Faire La Toile* – the indignant denunciation of a newlywed who discovers that her husband lacks the skill to make the sheets for their marriage bed.

"In traditional society love and sexuality were considered taboo subjects. No one was supposed to talk about their wedding night, for instance. So songs like that were used to release pent up emotions."

With the choice and range of their material, intelligently crafted arrangements and wonderfully expressive voices, the girls of Galant – and the tireless Berthiaume – have carved out a unique and influential niche on Quebec's folk scene. And they're starting to reach out to audiences farther afield.

"We get on really well together and I think it shows," says Hébert. "Earlier this year Patricia left, and we brought in Isabelle Payette, who fitted into the team with no problem – the Festival du Bois was her debut gig with us. Right now we're working towards a second album, and we're doing more shows outside of Quebec. We love these old songs so much. They're so witty and so wise, and such fun to sing – and we're thrilled to let them travel."

Old-Time Religion

David Essig returned to his Protestant past to record *Presbyterian Guitar* – a remarkable contemporary approach to religious songs he heard as a child. Roger Levesque hears his confession.

It's commonly thought that most of us don't change much past our early formative years. David Essig's story takes a gradual but real character arc.

He's a musician who left the country of his birth over moral issues, who embraced rural life in another nation, only to evolve



towards a new philosophy and attitude in his art.

At 61, he's been looking back over the long journey that has brought him to Canada's West Coast. In fact, his newest recording looks back to his origins.

It's an all-instrumental album dubbed Presbyterian Guitar, an acoustic and electric exploration of traditional hymns and songs he learned in the Presbyterian church as a kid with two extra original tunes included.

Listen in and you find out there's real brain appeal, too, especially in the wonderfully intricate tracks featuring Doug Cox, Steve Dawson and Essig together on Weissenborn guitars. Other tunes include some of Essig's first lap-steel guitar work prompted by an encounter with the Campbell Brothers.

"I wanted to do something that was respectful of the material," he explains, "but still interesting for the contemporary listener. There's a constant theme of old Protestant gospel songs and the American South. In a way it was kind of a look back and a nice breezy way to get into instrumentals, the kind of feminine voice of the Weissenborn guitar and Piedmont styles, too."

Blessed by warm harmonies, the album is a delightful if unexpected addition to

his ouvre. In fact, Presbyterian Guitar is one of three separate recording projects he will show up on this year, adding to an already prolific discography that reflects just how multi-faceted his muse really is.

For the full story you have to go back to his origins.

Essig grew up in Washington, DC, and was exposed to the usual mainstream sounds before he got serious about the guitar at 16. Around that time - in the mid-1960s - the Washington area hosted a rich roots music scene. Essig drank in as much as he could, gaining familiarity with bluegrass acts like The Country Gentlemen, learning to play mandolin from John Duffy. At the same time, the archiving efforts of the Smithsonian Museum and the Library of Congress meant blues pioneers from the southern states also frequented the area. From listening to the likes of Mississippi John Hurt, Skip James and Elizabeth Cotton, he was able to pick up fingerpicking and slide guitar, drawing from both the Delta and Piedmont styles.

At 20, he was performing in coffee houses at the same time as he completed a Ph.D. in economics. By then he was ready to become a draft dodger over his discontent with American politics and the Vietnam War, but by chance he wasn't





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drafted due to his poor eyesight. In 1971 he left anyway and came north to Canada. After playing the Mariposa Folk Festival, he immersed himself in the busy folk scene of southern Ontario, making friends with artists like Ken Whiteley and Stan Rogers.

In 1974 he was ready to record his first album but couldn't get signed, so he put out the LP *Redbird* on his own Woodshed Records label. He wanted it to be an outlet for other artists, too, and soon produced debut discs by Willie P. Bennett and Fred Eaglesmith, among others.

From early on, traditional music left a mark on Essig's own songs, such that many of them sounded as if they could have been written generations before. That still holds today, even though he long ago matured beyond the confessional angle to embrace a wider social awareness.

"I just try to write songs that I would like to listen to and hope maybe somewhere there's a thread that holds them together."

In 2004 he undertook an exercise in archiving and reassessing his career, rerecording 30 songs for the impressive double-disc set A Stone In My Pocket (Pacific/Warner), adding Oliver Schroer's violin and Tobin Frank's acoustic bass and accordion to his own mess of guitars, mandolin and vocals. His own extra string overdubs help make it a rich tapestry of nearly 20 years of varied material.

In the liner notes to the new anthology, Essig recalls how his father once came to a concert and asked afterwards. "Don't you know any happy songs?" He realized almost every tune in the show had included the death of somebody.

Since then Essig allows that his focus as a songwriter has changed.

"Maybe it's just a function of getting

older. I've tried to take the good fortune I've had to a place where I can help enable other people. There's a phrase I love from the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, that we must 'emanicipate one another from the imprisoning horizon of the immediate'."

"It's something I've started using when I teach songwriting. If you've got the talent and the tools and the vision to create songs, then you should accept the responsibility to help your fellow citizens see beyond the next 12 hours, to find compassion and to look forward."

Themes of rural life and the environment have often influenced his songs, too, especially after a West Coast tour prompted Essig and his second wife, Milena, to relocate to Thetis Island 15 years ago. With the bonus of relative isolation he was able to set up his own home studio, a facility he re-configured just last year when they moved again to Protection Island, another small settlement off Vancouver Island. He has now produced more than 60 albums including 25 from his own studio, with 16 releases under his own name.

Among the recent sessions is an oddly upbeat album called Beverly Street, featuring covers of his tunes recorded by Winnipeg friend Romi Mayes with the D-Rangers, and Essig himself guesting (out on the Dollartone label this June). The artist was thrilled to hear his own songs take on a new life.

His next release is a complete rerecording of the long-out-of-print 1985 LP of traditional blues material. Whose Muddy Shoes, to be dubbed New Muddy Shoes. Still in progress, it's set to feature Chris Whiteley, Essig and a rhythm section on earthy renditions of classic numbers like Rollin' And Tumblin'. "It was interesting to see how much of it changed and how much stayed the same. The grooves are very similar but the guitar has changed dramatically."

Chalk it up as another example of an artist who continues to evolve.

Acadian Ancestry

Vishten delve deep into their Acadian roots with youthful flair and energy. Success at home and abroad clearly indicates the resurgence in their culture. Sandy MacDonald takes note.

Just how far is the tiny Evangeline district of Prince Edward Island from the festival stages of France or Louisiana?

Just about the width of the draw on Pastelle LeBlanc's accordion or the length of Pascal Miousse's fiddle bow. The two maritime musicians are half of Vishten, one of the most exciting young traditional groups to come out of Atlantic Canada.

LeBlanc and her twin sister. Emmanuelle, the fiddler Miousse and guitarist Elmer Deagle perform all over the francophone music world, spreading the driving rhythms and melodies of Acadian music.

Their music is rooted in the small coastal village of Mount Carmel, 20 kilometres west of Summerside in the French Acadian district of the island.

"This area is pretty vibrant with music," says Emmanuelle LeBlanc, 27, from her cottage in Mount Carmel. "There was always a chance to go hear music, or there was a house party."

LeBlanc lives within earshot of her father's house where she and her sister grew up. The family house would rock with the sound of fiddle, piano and stepdancing. The traditional songs of Acadia would fill the house, and the sisters soaked







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Tubthumping

it all up.

"Our father is the music teacher at Evangeline school, the local French school here. We always grew up having house parties. My father plays flute and piano, and plays traditional music on both."

Their mother was a step dancer, and passed on the exurberant dance style to her daughters.

"The house would always be packed — I remember coming down once and counting 17 fiddlers sitting in our kitchen."

Like small Scots-settled villages in rural Cape Breton, the tightly knit Acadian communities fostered a love for traditional culture.

The LeBlanc sisters learned the ancient Acadian songs and tunes early, and are now finding a new voice to take that music to the world stage.

That's a sign of the resurgent strength of the traditional Acadian culture in parts of Atlantic Canada. Though less than five per cent of the island's population, the Acadians are enjoying a renewed sense of identity.

LeBlanc remembers when there was just one traditional fiddler in the area, Eddie Arsenault. But as just one flickering flame can keep the fire alive, the spirit of l'Acadie has rebounded.

Grand Dérangement, Barachois, Bois-Joli, Lennie Gallant, BLOU and others proudly perform Acadian music for francophone audiences around the world.

The roots of the band formed when the sisters moved to Moncton, NB, in 2000 for a stint at university. While the university didn't work out ("I stayed for a year and a half — that was enough"), the environment helped cement the sisters' dream to have their own band.

"We weren't sure how it was going to happen. But we applied for a showcase at the FrancoFête en Acadie, a gathering of French artists from Eastern Canada."

On the strength of that dynamic showcase, the band (then performing as Celtitude), was booked solid the following summer. From the early days, their infectious energy and skilled playing struck a chord with audiences.

Vishten took its name from a traditional Acadian song with a murky past—much is in a "made-up" language, perhaps derived from Mi'kmaq.

"It's said it was composed by a man from the Evangeline area here," explains Emmanuelle. "He had 14 children and wrote the song to entertain the children."

After a couple of lineup changes, the band is now a quartette — Emmanuelle plays whistles, bodhran, piano and sings; sister Pastelle handles accordion



and piano; Pascal Miousse on fiddle and mandolin; and Elmer Deagle holds it all together on guitar.

The band released its debut indie album in 2004, and has been touring almost constantly since. Offstage sales have been strong, topping 12,000 copies.

"We travel a lot in Europe," says Emmanuelle, "and we find about 10 per cent of the crowd buy CDs." France has been a strong market for Vishten, nurtured after several tours there.

Vishten is booked for a month in France this summer, then return to North America for the prestigious Newport Folk Festival.

"The French are really interested in different cultures. With us being Canadian and our ancestors coming from France, they are even more interested — they love our accent and the show."

That show brings the kitchen party feel to the festival stage, with the four musicians on straight-back chairs across the stage, rolling through songs and tune sets. The sisters will often set aside their instruments for a burst of step-dancing.

"A lot of people say they haven't heard this type of sound before — it's kind of Irish Scottish but definitely something different."

That "something different" is all in the rhythm and the drive of the music, says Emmanuelle. While the two cultures share several tunes in common, it's the setting of the music that gives it its distinctive cultural colouring.

"The groove of the tune is a little different, fired by the fiddling of Miousse, a native of the Magdelan Islands.

"Some people are purists about the music. Maybe a Scottish or Irish fiddler wants to play the tune exactly the way it is. But we let ourselves get loose and are a little more adventurous."

The band is a favourite at Festival InterCeltique in Lorient in Brittany. Each

year, organizers arrange an Acadian tent, and Vishten are regulars. Through the weeklong festival, 30,000 visitors will pack the tent to get their blood and their feet moving to the rollicking music of Vishten.

Finding music for the band is another exercise of old meeting new. Emmanuelle will scour the music archives at Universite de Moncton to find interesting material for the band. "I try to find songs we haven't heard before to make them live again."

Last spring, the band hunkered down in a cosy studio in Shediac, NB, to record their important sophomore album. They brought in Irish flautist Grey Larsen from Indiana, a friend they'd met on the festival circuit.

"We asked Gray to come over for a week, and we pieced the album together. We came up with about 14 tunes we thought were coherent and wanted on the album."

Emmanuelle found a Cajun gem, *Joli Coeur*, on an old tape of Louisiana French music. They give it a rollicking treatment, reuniting the Cajun and Acadian traditions.

The album was initially released through Plage in Canada. But during a trip to the Folk Alliance in Memphis earlier this year, Vishten kindled a relationship with Toronto-based Borealis. In May, the band inked a deal with Borealis to re-release the disc with redesigned artwork.

"If you have the old album, hold onto it," laughs Emmanuelle. "It will be a collector's item."

LeBlanc is excited about the deal with the indie label. With major player Borealis onboard, Vishten can count on their music receiving much wider national distribution with some added marketing push.

"I think it's really great for giving the band better exposure."



The McDades "Bloom"



Bloom melds brilliant improvisation with innovative songwriting and evocative grooves to create a new Canadian sound. The McDades were winner of the 2007 Juno Award for Best Roots & Traditional Album of The Year (Group), winner of two 2006 Canadian Folk Music

Awards for Best World Album and Best Instrumental Group and winner of Best World Album for the 2007 Independent Music Awards (USA).

"Playing with a fiery energy that would warm the coldest Canadian winter, this inventive quintet mixes its Celtic, Jazz and Quebecois influences with the sounds and spirit of everywhere in the world that people dance." – Dirty Linen

Dawn Tyler Watson & Paul Deslauriers "En Duo"



This captivating new acoustic album from vocalist Dawn Tyler Watson and guitarist Paul Deslauriers is a pleasure from start to finish. A kind of musical holiday, it's an unpretentious, heartfelt record, without bass or drums, stripped down to the barebones of voice and qui-

tar. The repertoire includes some of rock's finest songwriting, from The Miracles to Bruce Cockburn and from Steve Earle to Led Zeppelin, with some originals (by Dawn) added for good measure. One of the most refreshingly honest records to come along in years!

Harry Manx "Wise And Otherwise"



Blues raga at its best! The incredible follow-up album to Dog My Cat, Harry Manx recorded a dozen tracks with a few well-chosen covers that showcase his finesse at blending Indian music with Delta blues. Harry's use of the banjo on "The Thrill is Gone" defines his

fusing of Indian melody, making this one of the albums' knockout tracks. Produced by Jordy Sharp and released previously in 2002, this re-release appears in snazzy new packaging.

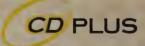
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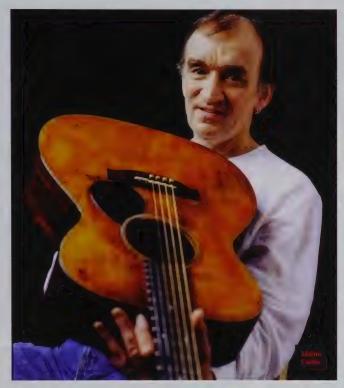
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Martin Carthy inspired the likes of Bob Dylan and Paul Simon. A supreme guitar stylist and distinctive singer, the ubiquitous Carthy played a prominent role in the British folk revival and continues to contribute to its evolution. Tony Montague does Darwin.

Few people – if any – know more about traditional English song than Martin Carthy, although he'd never claim any such authority. The 66-year-old singer and guitarist is a modest chap, and after five decades at the forefront of the folk scene what strikes him is how much he still has to learn about the music he loves with such evident passion.

"The more work I've done, the more I realize there's still a mountain to climb," he says, reached at his home in Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, U.K. "They're astonishing songs – deeply political, and they go straight to the heart of the human condition."

Unlike his wife, Norma Waterson, Carthy wasn't born into a family of traditional

musicians. He grew up in London, and was a teenager when rock 'n' roll started to break. The first song he recalls learning to play is Heartbreak Hotel. But Carthy's open ears soon led him to clubs and pubs where, in the late '50s, he heard the likes of Scottish traveller Jeannie Robertson and Norfolk fisherman Sam Larner sing. He became hooked.

"The thing I found out about traditional song is that there were as many ways of doing it as there were old singers. Each of them made up the patchwork, the whole panoply of English traditional music. I can't bear the idea of definitive versions. And it also made me realize there was no definitive style."

Carthy listened intently and began evolving his own distinctive way of singing: a slightly nasal intonation, an occasional touch of vibrato, and strong, clear articulation. "The story has to come first," he stresses. A few songs are delivered a cappella, but in the main he accompanies himself on guitar, with an unfussy rhythmic style that always enhances the words rather than distracts

from them.

Despite the age of the songs — or, arguably, because of it—Carthy is adamant that they remain absolutely contemporary. "Tradition is a progressive force. You can't pin down when these tunes and songs were created; that's what makes them unique."

By the early '60s Carthy was a regular performer at London's leading folk club, the Troubadour, where he proved to be hugely influential. Bob Dylan heard him sing the ballad *Lord Franklin* and later transformed it into *Bob Dylan's Dream*; and Paul Simon prettified Carthy's version of *Scarborough Fair* and made it one of the emblematic songs of the times on both sides of the Atlantic.

Over the years Carthy has played in a number of configurations, most notably with fiddler Dave Swarbrick as a duo, in the electrified-folk band Steeleye Span, with quintessential English trad quintet Brass Monkey, and as a family member of the Watersons and later Waterson:Carthy. But he's never abandoned his solo career.

I caught him recently on a visit to the Royal Oak folk club in Lewes, England, and his performance was riveting in its intensity, particularly on the old ballads Clyde's Water, Prince Heathen, and Bill Norrie. The songs seemed to be singing themselves through Carthy – which is how he feels it should be.

"If any of us are doing our jobs right, the song comes through without touching the sides. It's not me on my own but in a room full of people, and their contribution is at least as important as mine. I'm a vehicle, and it's what people do with that. Notice I'm not using the word 'audience', because I think of audience as passive. I'm fond of saying that this third party—'the beast' as I call it—manifests itself. It takes everybody to do that. And it's quite fantastic when it's there.

"The old ballads are telling us eternal truths. *Prince Heathen* speaks loud and clear. The man is saying, 'But I love you,' and she says, 'It's not enough'. *Willy's Lady* is about how people can manipulate each other, often quite brutally. *Bill Norrie* is about how a secret can devastate an entire family; you can sometimes hear a gasp in the room when the truth is revealed. They're powerful songs. Pay attention and they'll knock you sideways."

For all his respect to his sources, Carthy has always been prepared to make changes and additions to songs where he feels they're warranted. As early as his self-titled debut album of 1965, for instance, he came up with the final verse of *High*



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Germany. And he ditched the happy ending of *Prince Heathen*, on the 1969 album of that name, to provide one that's more consistent with the preceding tale of cruelty and resistance to it.

There are many more examples of subtle reworking — and occasionally of major reconstructive surgery, as for *The Famous Flower of Serving Men*, on *Shearwater* (1972), one of Carthy's longest and most compelling songs. "You can find four and half verses in Child's English and Scottish popular ballads, and there are some more verses later in his notes. Basically I built a bridge between them, and manufactured an end to the piece."

To bring out the essence of any song, Carthy works assiduously on accompaniment, pacing and phrasing. "If it's from somebody's singing, then I'll want to play what they've done. If it's from print, I'll read it again and again and again, and there are certain phrases I won't use because they don't sing right. The language has to be loose-limbed, and the whole thing quite free, with all sorts of pulses and little changes of tack, rhythmically."

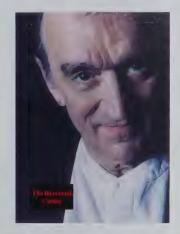
Carthy is no folk purist, and has recorded

some distinctly non-traditional pieces. On Signs of Life (1998), for instance, he included both Elvis's Heartbreak Hotel and the Bee Gees' New York Mine Disaster because he regards them as great songs. And with traditional material, he insists that musicians should have a free hand in their choice of instruments and arrangements.

"I don't see that there's any kind of problem here. My generation found a way of doing this – the downside is believing it's the only way. That's nonsense. Over the years people have always used what's to hand. Otherwise you wouldn't see a concertina used for morris dancing, it would still be pipe and tabor. The whole thing is about continuity, with one hand out to the past and another hand to the future. That's what my job is.

"We need to be careful about imagining we can be pure, because we can't be. Music has to be diverse, and I want us to be part of that diversity and the mix. There are those who believe the tradition can be spoiled by nasty electric instruments or whatever. I don't go along with that. This stuff has survived all sorts of fire and pestilence and war, and it can survive

electricity – it can benefit from it. for God's sake. The great thing about these songs is the way they've adapted over the years. The only way traditional music can be harmed is by not doing it."



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The Chimes of Freedom Flashing

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired the Staple Singers involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. That was in 1963. Four decades later, Mavis Staples considers the freedom songs she sang in those turbulent times more appropriate than ever. We'll Never Turn Back, her remarkable new recording produced by Ry Cooder, revists past racist atrocities and poignantly points out bigotry still thrives in America today. By Roddy Campbell

Too often carelessly slipped into the lexicon of lazy music critics, the term "legend" repeatedly represents hyperbole. In reference to Mavis Staples, however, it appears like an understatement.

The Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame singer's storied achievements – both as a solo performer and as a cornerstone of the trailblazing family gospel unit, The Staple Singers – span generations and genres.

Pick a star. Any star. Bob Dylan? Aretha Franklin? George Jones? Ray Charles? Curtis Mayfield? Prince? Yeah, Mavis Staples has recorded with each and every one of them. Today, though, on the phone from her home in Chicago her comments, reverential and cheerful, are largely reserved for one Ryland Peter Cooder – the producer of her extraordinary new disc, We'll Never Turn Back.

A powerful and deeply moving collection of contemporary and traditional civil rights freedom songs, it features Mavis at her absolutely spontaneous, soul-stirring best. She even contributes a rare song – the feisty yet tender autobiographical, My Own Eyes.

Ry Cooder, too, is in blistering form on guitar and mandolin. And, bless him, he had the impeccable taste to recruit guest harmony vocalists Ladysmith Black Mambazo from South Africa. Three members of the original Freedom Singers (formed in 1962 out of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at the insistence of Pete Seeger) also play a prominent vocal role.

Caps off, then, to Andy Kaulkin of Anti Records, who initiated this recording. Although it must be said, Kaulkin got the notion from reading U.S. Congressman John Lewis's memoir, Walking With The Wind - his account of leading the SNCC during the Civil Rights Movement (Lewis wrote the liner notes for this disc).

"Andy said, 'You know, Mavis, I've been thinking. When you were with the Staple Singers, you were always singing freedom songs before freedom songs had a name.' I said, 'Yeah, you're right about that.' He said, 'How about singing some freedom songs?' Right then I said, 'Do you think the world would want to hear freedom songs now?' And no sooner had I got it out of my mouth I said, 'Wait a minute, that's a great idea.' Because from what I've been seeing – I actually had flashbacks to the '60s watching the consequences of hurricane] Katrina. It's right in our faces, that racism and hatred. It's still here. It's still alive," says.

To reinforce that point she wrote My Own Eyes, which covers a litany of the racism she has encountered, both in the past and at present. It stretches from her summers spent with her grandparents in rural Mississippi — with its drinking fountains for whites only and even segregated laundromats — being ar-

rested by racist southern cops for little more than being black, to the suffering and deaths of countless African-Americans in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

"I just started thinking about New Orleans, about the people left for dead," says Mavis. "I had heard every bald-faced lie from politicians. They kept talking about how they were going to go down there and take care of the people in New Orleans. Nobody would go. Nobody. These people, stuffed up in the stadium – hot, no water, babies dying, bodies floating in black water.

"Where is the President? Where is the government? Where is the Red Cross? These are black people.

"Let me tell you the difference. [Greensboro], Kansas, the whole town was destroyed by a tornado. This is an all-white town. Help was there immediately. It's been two years for New Orleans. All the rubble is still like it was. That hurts. I had to speak out because that's what the Staple Singers have always been about.

"I was so grateful Congressman John Lewis wanted to write my liner notes. He said, 'Mavis, baby, you and your family kept us going. I'm so glad your doing this because it's still needed. Racism is still very much alive. These songs are still needed today."

Andy Kaulkin had approached Ry Cooder on several occasions to produce records for Anti without success. In the case of Mavis Staples, he said yes immediately. Cooder had, of course, worked with Mavis's father, Roebuck "Pops" Staples, on his 1992 recording, Peace To The Neighborhood. And when Pops and Ry won individual Grammys in 1994 – Staples for Father Father (Best Contemporary Blues Album) and Cooder for Talkin' Timbuktu with Ali Farka Touré (Best World Music Album) – Cooder said in his acceptance speech, "I have to thank Pops Staples. He taught me."

"When we were getting ready to get started, Ry called me and wanted to come to my home," says Mavis. "He wanted to sit with me so we could figure out what we were going to do. Talking to him on the phone, he asked me, 'Now listen, Mavis, do you have one of Pops's amplifiers?' I said, 'No, I didn't get one but my brother did.' I had to call Pervis. 'Bring me one of daddy's amplifiers over here.' And he said, 'For what, Mavis?' I said, 'Don't ask me no questions, just bring it,' because Ry was coming the next day.

"Ry Cooder came in here and went straight to that amplifier. He stroked his hand over the top and, just passionate, 'Pop Staples's amp' (she whispers). Then he plugged his guitar in and sat back just like Pops would do. The same strums. The same strings. I said, 'Oh my God, we're going to have fun here. This is going to be good.'

"He really admired Pops."

No nostalgic trip down memory lane, We'll Never Turn Back. Rather, it's as vital and inspirational an affirmation against racism as the optimistic but resilient anthems from the not-too-distant past.

Cooder couldn't be reached for comments for this article but in an essay written by Bob Bowman – the award-winning author of Soulsville U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records – as part of the promotional material accompanying this release, Cooder offers him a fair amount of creative insight.

"I wanted to avoid summer-camp nostalgia and 'feel-good' history light," says Cooder. "I wanted to remind people that these songs tell real stories about real events that were deadly serious and seriously deadly."

It's a point clearly made on *In The Missis-sippi River* – a track with a chilling background. The movie Mississippi Burning focuses on the June 1964 murder and disappearance of three civil rights volunteers – James Chaney, 21, Andrew Goodman, 20, and Michael Schwerner, 24 – after being held in police custody on trumped-up charges.

What the film didn't show, however, was the search for the three men turned up count-

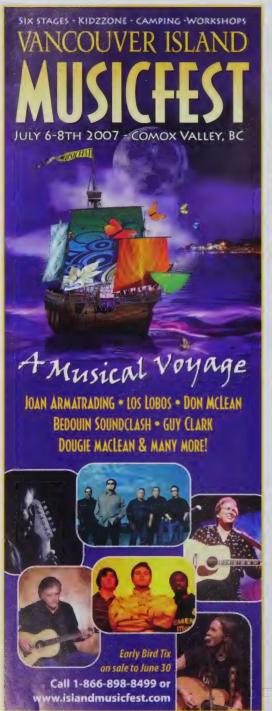
less, unaccounted for, mostly mutilated black bodies in the Mississippi River – thus the title of the song written by Marshall Jones, the former Freedom Singer.

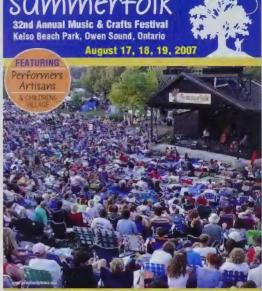
"We happened to be sitting at the lunch table and all of a sudden these Freedom Singers – they're over in a corner – [she sings] 'In the Mississippi River.' My skin was crawling on my bones. Goosebumps came up. 1 looked at Ry and he looked at me. We were frozen and they kept going, [sings] 'And you can count them one by one, could be your son...' I got up and I said, 'Where did you all get that song from? We got to put that down.' 'Oh no, Mavis, [Marshall] don't like people to sing his songs.' I said, 'I'll tell you what, we'll put the song down first and then we'll call him.' Ry said, 'Yes, that's exactly what we'll do.' We did.

"When they told me [about the lyrics] tears welled up in my eyes. They were dragging the Mississippi River and these bodies were coming up. People hadn't been looking for them. I said, 'Oh my God'. I had to sit down. You just don't know how many of us black people might still be in that river. It's just hard, but you choose to do this and you ask the Lord for strength to sing the song."

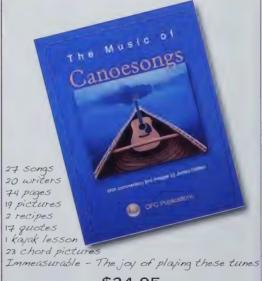
While Mavis was born in Chicago, IL, in 1939, Pops Staples arrived in this world







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Dec. 28, 1914, in Winona, MS. He grew up alongside country bluesman Charley Patton on Will Dockery's Plantation – 20,000 acres of cotton fields often considered the home of the Delta Blues. Pops would attribute his unique guitar style to playing the blues with the likes of Patton, Robert Johnson, apparently, and Howlin' Wolf. Pops, though, was equally inspired by southern gospel singing.

Married at 18, he had two children. Cleotha and Pervis, by the time he left for the north in 1936. Yvonne and Mavis were born in Chicago. Cleotha, Pervis, Mavis and Pops formed the initial Staple Singers in 1951.

Performing in local churches, their popularity slowly spread to secular audiences, due largely to Pops's older style of a cappella southern vocal arrangements and his distinctive guitar licks. As their popularity spread, blues and folk festivals started to book the Staple Singers, including high-flying Newport in its heyday in the early '60s.

"It was our style of singing that started them calling us," says Mavis. "You see Pops had his own style of guitar playing. [But] it was a long time before I knew he was playing the blues on his guitar while we were singing gospel. Our sound was so unique."

Plus, they were the first African-Americans to record the songs of Bob Dylan. Throw in a minor hit with Stephen Stills's For What It's Worth and concert promoters began to bill them as "soul-folk." Ouch!

"We met Dylan in '60, '62, somewhere in there. I think I was about 17 and Dylan was 16. Dylan said, 'I've listened to the Staple Singers since I was 12 years old.' Then we were on the same Westinghouse TV show and when Bobby started singing, Pops told us, 'Listen, do you all hear what that kid is singing.' And Bobby was singing, 'How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man.'

"Pops could relate to that because he would tell us that down in Mississippi, if he was walking on the same side of the street as a white person and they were walking towards each other, he would have to cross over. They couldn't walk on the same side of the street. We recorded six or seven of [Dylan's] songs.

"Bobby and I had a song called *Got to Change My Way of Thinking* out a couple of years ago [2003] that was nominated for a Grammy. We've been friends now down through the years."

The individual who made the biggest impact on the Staple Singers, however, had little to do with music. Pops first heard the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King speak in 1963.

"Pops told us, 'I like this man. I like his message. And if he can preach it, we can sing it," says Mavis. "So we started to sing freedom songs."

While many freedom songs were adapted,

from traditional gospel and spiritual songs, Pops wrote the anthem Why Am I Treated So Bad?, which squeaked into the U.S. pop charts Top 100. He would also write such movement standards as When Will We Be Paid For The Work We Have Done? and Long Walk to DC. The Staple Singers performed these freedom songs at rallies and marches, often alongside Dr. King.

"What I like to remember mostly about Dr. King was his laughter," says Mavis. "He had this jovial laughter. You see, it was so seldom you would hear him laughing. When we would be going to the meetings, and all the men would be standing in the parking lot in a circle talking, and all of a sudden you would hear Dr. King laugh. And that made me laugh. That made me happy. He was a great man. I don't think I'll ever meet another leader like Dr. King in my lifetime."

The Staple Singers would perform for U.S. presidents Kennedy, Carter and Clinton, and record with Steve Cropper and Booker T and the MGs – true giants of American music – for the fabled soul label, Stax. All in all, the Staple Singers notched up seven gold and six platinum albums, as well as several hit singles, including two at No. 1, I'll Take You There and Let's Do It Again.

In 1999, the Staple Singers were inducted into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame along with Paul McCarney, Curtis Mayfield, Wilson Pickett and Billy Joel. The former Fugees vocalist Lauryn Hill read the list of achievements accomplished by Pops and his family.

"Oh man, that was a great feeling. We were gospel singers. We never thought we'd be inducted into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame. I guess we had made our mark.

"My father had been sick, and when he found out we were going to be inducted he told my brother, he said, 'Pervis get my tuxedo ready. I'm going to that.' He wasn't altogether well but he enjoyed it. It was something to be proud of."

Pops Staples, sadly, died in December 2000. He was 85.

While Mavis recorded her first solo album for Stax in 1969, her own output increased as that of the Staple Singers diminished. Particularly well received were her recordings for R&B megastar Prince and his Paisley Park label. The purple one produced both records: Time Waits For No One and The Voice. People magazine named the latter to its Top Ten Albums of 1993. Three years later, her Spirituals & Gospels: Dedicated to Mahalia Jackson – a family friend and a great source of inspiration – received similar recognition. Yet it took more than a decade before Mavis recorded again when she released Have A Little Faith on the blues label, Alligator. And that pretty much brings us back to We'll Never Turn Back, where we started, dear reader. And as Mavis will gladly concede, making this record was like no other.

"I tell you, I've never done a session like this. I always know what I'm going to sing when I go to the studio. I rehearse at least three songs the night before in my hotel room. None of that happened. I would go to the studio and Ry would already be there and we would talk a little bit and all of a sudden he would say, 'Well Mavis, what do you think about this one?' I'd say, 'Well, let's try, Ry.'

"The guys would always keep the machine on and it would be a take. It was just a dream team, you know. And I felt Pops's presence so many times in that studio. Ry, you would hear Pops's licks in there. It was just magical. I felt so at home and so happy

about what we were doing.

I felt like I was doing something that I was supposed to be doing."





Joe Boyd

The Penguin Eggs Interview



As stage manager at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, Joe Boyd sat in the eve of the hurricane as Bob Dylan went electric. Still only 22, the Boston-born Boyd began his career in music a year prior as Muddy Waters's road manager. Eventually settling in the U.K., Boyd went on to produce records for the likes of Eric Clapton, Pink Floyd, Nick Drake, The Incredible String Band, John Martyn, Maria Muldaur and Fairport Convention. The latter's Liege & Lief - a brilliant combination of rock with traditional folk songs charted new territory for the British folk revival. All the riveting details are in Boyd's autobiography, White Bicycles: Making Music In The 1960s. It's a wonderful, brutally honest yet totally captivating account of a seminal period in contemporary music. Boyd was a guest of the North American Folk Alliance in Memphis in February, where he read from his book and answered questions from host Richard Flohil and the audience. Boyd's responses are edited for brevity.

How did you find yourself in Britain in 1964?

If you were a blues collector in the early '60s, Europe was a kind of the promised land because American labels weren't putting out reissues. So if you wanted to buy the Blind Boy Fuller album - the very exotic looking gatefold LP - it was issued by the British [label] Phillips. It has a very interesting set of liner notes because it tells about Blind Boy Fuller's life as an itinerant blues singer in South Carolina in the '30s, and it mentions other players of a similar style that played in the same kind of circuit, and it mentions two names: Floyd Council and Pink Anderson. And that set of liner notes is where Pink Floyd got their name.

Anyway, I had this vision of England being a promised land, and I wanted to go there as soon as I finished Harvard. I had this idea that I could make money writing for Jazz Journal and Jazz Monthly, you know, bringing an American perspective. It was a complete fantasy. But the lucky thing was that Manny Greenhill, he was

the power broker of folk music in Boston in the 1960s. He managed Joan Baez, he represented Pete Seeger in New England, and he put on all the great concerts at the City Hall in Boston. He was a very gruff type of figure, very imposing. One day he called me up out of the blue and asked if I would do a job for him. Would I look after Jesse Fuller, who was coming to town to do a few dates?

I was desperate for money, so I said, 'Sure!' He said, 'I'll give you 25 dollars to meet Jesse at the bus station and take him to open for Bob Dylan at the Brandeis Folk Festival, do a gig at the Golden Vanity, and then do a recording session for Prestige [Records] that Paul Rothchild was producing. This turned out to be a life-changing weekend. Because, first of all, I helped Paul Rothchild in the session. I knew a lot about Jesse Fuller's repertoire, and Paul was very impressed and made a mental note.

At the same time, Manny was impressed that I got Jesse on time, and sober, to all these gigs. He then put in a word with George Wein who was organizing this blues, gospel tour to England. That was in 1964, and Manny asked George if he needed a tour manager, and said, 'If you do, I know this kid in Boston.' So he called me and said, 'George will see you tomorrow morning.' So I jumped on a train and the next morning I was in the music business.

Had you ever managed a tour before?

No. George was a jazz man. He didn't know anything about blues and sort of left it all to me. So I went to England in that role. The other thing that was amazing in those days, in the spring of '64, at that time Muddy Waters, other than one appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival, had never performed before a white audience in America. He'd been to England a few times and I was just amazed, the first night in Bristol, the place was packed. And at the end of the show there was a queue of teenagers waiting outside the dressing room door for Muddy's autograph. I thought, this is it. I've come home. This is where I want to be. I like this place.

Some of the earliest records you produced in England were of traditional English folk artists.

I was like a lot of Americans, well like a lot of English people, too, in that I had a very low opinion of English folk music. All I knew about English folk music was Ewan MacColl singing sea shanties with his finger in his ear.

Anyway, at the end of the blues and gospel tour I stayed behind in England. A lot of people from the folk scene took us to blues clubs. The folk and blues scene kind of overlapped. This guy called Red Sullivan I ran into in a pub one night and he said, 'What are you doing right now?' And I said, 'Nothing.' He said, 'Come with me!' And he kind of dragged me upstairs to hear the lan Campbell folk group. 'Wow! I had no idea that the local stuff could sound like this.' I just fell in love.

And then I started discovering more and more. And then I had this epiphany of listening to the Watersons, hearing Norma Waterson sing, and just going, 'Oh my God, this voice is just so wonderful.' And so one day I went up and I stayed in Birmingham with the Ian Campbell group, and did errands for them and helped out around the house just so I could go to gigs with them.

One of the tasks Ian used to give me was to take his two kids to the park to play. I'd hold their hands going across the street and I'd push the swings. Twenty years later I was launching my Hannibal Records label. One of the groups I really wanted to sign was UB40. I went to meet Robin and Ali [Campbell], two of the leaders of the group. I said, 'Come on, you want to give me a good price, don't you. Remember I pushed you on the swing when you were four.' And they said, 'Oh yeah. We got a better offer from A&M (laughs).

You mentioned Norma Waterson's voice, what else attracts you?

The first time I heard Fairport Convention, they were doing this American repertoire. They were a British group that wanted to be an American folk rock group. I was impressed with their talent but I was skeptical about their taste. They did the start of this instrumental number, Paul Butterfield's East West. And I thought, 'What a stupid thing to do.' Richard Thompson then steps forward and takes this three-minute solo that made you forget that Mike Bloomfield had ever lived. I just went, 'For goodness sake.' This kid is 17 years old and can do that? And I went into the dressing room and sat waving a contract. So I think it's just when you have this feeling you're hearing something you've never heard before.

How has Fairport's Liege & Lief stood up?

To be honest, for me, Unhalfbricking is

the greatest Fairport Convention record. Unhalfbricking was the first record [Dave] Swarbrick recorded with them. And it has the first real traditional ballad done in a way that became identified with Liege & Lief called, I believe, A Sailor's Life. But it was also part of a record that included Who Knows Where The Time Goes – Sandy Denny songs, Richard Thompson songs, Bob Dylan songs. To me that record was Fairport Convention grown up, come of age, confident, evolved beyond this weird English version of West Coast American froth. They had become their own thing.

And the cover they conceived was so confident. It was just a photograph with no title. And they insisted on it. I thought, 'OK, you guys, you think you're hot shit.' And I was in New York, I just finished playing it to Jim Rooney and the Newport Festival board and he was blown away by it and he said, 'OK, we'll definitely invite them this summer to Newport. And at five o'clock the next morning I got a phone call from England. Their drummer [Martin Lamble] was dead, killed when their van plunged off the motorway. So that group never toured. And that whole thing never happened.

But Liege & Lief when I go back and listen to it, I'm very proud. There are four or five tracks that are absolutely fantastic. As a record, as a totality, I don't like it as much because there are weak tracks on it as well. Come All Ye is a bullshit track.

When you hear someone say, 'So and so, they've got it'. Is there a way to define what 'it' is?

My answer to this kind of question ends up sounding arrogant. I spent all my childhood listening to music, not just to blues and jazz, but my grandmother was a concert pianist and I used to be entertained listening to Chopin. I used to listen and listen and listen. So I felt as if I had a context in which to put things, you know. Is what I'm hearing now an artist I just walked into a pub and heard, can I put that into my brain that holds all this other great music that I've listened to? Is this going to be there along with those people 20 years from now? Every once in a while, I've been fortunate to have a few of those moments where the answer came back to me, 'Yes.' I had that feeling when I first heard Mike Heron and Robin Williamson (The Incredible String Band), when I first heard The Watersons, when I first heard Dave Swarbrick, when I first heard Richard Thompson, when I first heard Nick Drake, when I first heard Sandy Denny.

Dave Van Ronk?

I talk in the book about one of the jobs that I ended up getting when I worked for George Wein. I was production manager at Newport in 1965, so I was the guy who plugged in Bob Dylan's electric amp. I was able to watch up close the drama that week, because a lot of things that change history, you only realize it later. But this was a weekend where you knew as it happened, that every hour that went by, was changing history, somewhat, and that at the end of this weekend, nothing would ever be quite the same. The conflicts that emerged that weekend, to me, were conflicts that I had observed earlier between the New York school of folk music and the Boston school of folk music.

Paul Rothchild and I had this project



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to make the sound great, and all these guys on the board of the Newport folk foundation - Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax, Theodore Bikel - didn't like this. I think to a good New York traditional left wing folkie, if you were good enough just to stand around with a microphone and sing, and people could hear it, the melody and lyrics, that was good enough. The session was getting sounds right, harmonies audible, virtuosity of the instruments clear. It was kind of a little too intrinsic in its affection for the music. Anyway the passage that does include a reference to Mr. Van Ronk, which I talk about the difference between New York and Boston in the '60s.

[He reads] Around Harvard Square, people were always going away to or coming back from India, Mexico, North Africa, Paris, London or Japan. They soaked up Zen, flamenco guitar, Rimbaud's poetry, and the new way of getting high. Everyone bought the blues country music reissue LPs emerging in the wake of Harry Smith's masterful Anthology of American Folk Music compilation. In cheap apartments, in old wooden houses, they taught themselves a particular Appalachian banjo or fiddle style, or figured out how Bukka White tuned his national steel-bodied guitar. New Yorkers like Seeger and the Weavers gave music from all over the world - often learned from Alan Lomax's field recordings - the same chirpy strum and hearty harmonies as if that proved all men were brothers.

The Cambridge scene was drawn more to differences than to similarities. Wildly divergent personalities and tastes of Smith and Lomax were central to the two aproaches that clashed so memorably at Newport in

1965. Lomax was a bear of a man, a skirt chaser, completely sure of himself and his theories about the interconnectedness of music across cultures and continents. Travelling from Mississippi prison chain gangs to Italian tobacco fields with his tape recorder, he had developed a thick hide and bullying manner. Smith, on the other hand, had become collector of recordings of traditional music almost by accident. His vast record collection almost buckled the floor of his apartment in the Chelsea Hotel, a few stops downtown from Lomax's sprawling West Side apartment.

New York folk singers were more

comfortable with the earnestness of Lomax's field recording, while the Cambridge positions were drawn in a context-free almost post-modern way, to the vivid personalities that shone through the commercial 78s that Smith and later compilers made available. Big Bill Broonzy, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, and Blind Lemon Jefferson had been stars of the 1920s and early '30s for good reason. Their artistry far surpassed that of Lomax's amateurs. Lomax viewed commercial recordings as tainted by manner. At a dinner party in London in the late '80s I suggested to him that folklorists and record producers were



both just professionals, making a living by recording music for a targetted audience. His response was to invite me outside for a fist sandwich.

I had arrived at Harvard with the same prejudices against folk music that I had against white blues singers. I bought tickets to a Joan Baez concert the first autumn only to please a girl I had just met ... but the opening act was Eric Von Schmidt and his astonishing renditions of Blind Willie Johnson songs lured me to hear more. Despite my best intentions, I began to become a folkie.

Bearded Von Schmidt was a hero to the younger singers. Von Schmidt's New York

counterpart, by dint of dramatic surname, and roughhouse blues style, was Dave Van Ronk. For me Van Ronk had none of the lyricism of Von Schmidt, and lacked his generosity of spirit. He was a hard-core Communist, drawn to the blues for its value as a political stance, rather than the beauty of the form. Perhaps I'm biased. Dave and his wife were sleeping on my sofa after an all-night poker game on Nov. 22, 1963. Woken by news of Kennedy's assassination, he gloated about chickens coming home to roost, and went back to sleep."

What's your take on the Dylan performance that day?

[He reads] Dylan surfaced on Saturday for the songwriting workshop with his familiar guise, a troubadour on acoustic guitar. In years past he would have worn a denim work shirt and jeans, but he and [Al] Cooper turned up in bizarre puff-sleeved polka-dot, duelling shirts - a momentary fashion fad from a Bleaker Street boutique. In hindsight, the shirts looked ridiculous, but Dylan's endorsement made them mockproof and they served as an advance notice of his provocation. He played for his half hour, and left to roars from a gigantic crowd. This was the folk festival, no encores. The timetable had to be kept. The Appalachian fiddlers had to start on time.

The first skirmish in the battle of Newport happened later that afternoon. Alan Lomax was introducing a strong program of country blues, Robert Pete Williams and Son House, with a crowd almost as large as the one earlier for Dylan. At the end it was announced that there would also be a performance by the Butterfield Band. Even without an LP on

the market, people wanted to see what the fuss was about. I started resetting the stage. Lomax scowled as we lugged amplifiers onto the platform and wired the extra mics to the soundboard. He told the audience that having heard real blues played on acoustic instruments, they could now hear some kids from Chicago trying to play the blues with the help of all this equipment. As he walked off stage, he passed [Butterfield's manager, Albert Grossman], who muttered, 'That was a real chicken-shit introduction. Alan.' Lomax pushed Grossman out of the way, suddenly round one of the kulturkampf

began with two large grey-haired men rolling around in the dust.

Word of the fight spread through the crowd and added to the charged atmosphere. The set was loud, other stages complained about the volume. Lomax called an emergency board meeting and voted to ban Grossman from the grounds. His crimes included not just the assault on Lomax but being a source of drugs. George Wein, the producer, reconvened the board and explained the facts of life. If they banned Grossman, Dylan, Peter Paul and Mary, [Jim] Kweskin, Odetta, and Butterfield would leave. George was not sure the festival could survive the alienation of its biggest stars and demands for ticket refunds. The board withdrew the motion. Grossman was cleared but the old guard seethed.

It turned out a beautiful clear evening with delicate pastel light. Dylan was scheduled for 45 minutes near the end of the first half. The introduction was made, the lights came up and Maggie's Farm blasted out into the night air. It was probably the loudest thing anyone in the audience had ever heard. A buzz of shock and amazement ran through the crowd. I was standing beside the soundboard. It was like being in the eye of a hurricane. All around us people were standing up, waving their arms. Some were cheering, some were booing, some where arguing, some grinning like madmen. This was different. This was the birth of rock.

Do you have any tips from the old recording school?

My favourite little anecdote about recording: five, six years ago, I went to a party in New York and I ran into Bruce Landvall of Bluenote Records. He told me about this girl that he had signed, because he liked her voice and her songs. She went out and she made the record on Pro Tools. She brought in the master and he played it and he said, 'I still like the songs and I like your voice, but there's something kind of depressing about the way this has been made.' Just that week, he had concluded a deal with producer-arranger Arif Mardin, who worked with Aretha Franklin. He was just moving into the Bluenote offices that day. Landvall walked down the hall and he said, 'Hey Arif, listen to this.' And Arif put it on, listened to it, and said, 'Well nice voice, nice songs, shame about the sound.' Landvall said, 'How about you take this girl into the studio for a day, and work with her, and redo one of her songs. He took her into an old jazz studio with high ceilings and did it the old-fashioned way. She liked the results. They kept going, and you probably know who I'm talking about: Norah Jones.

If you look back at the last eight years,

"This was the birth of rock." - Bob Dylan at Newport, 1965

there's plenty of records that have sold really, really well. But if you're talking about the world that I'm familiar with, which is the music that's directed at people older than 22, there are not that many records that come out without any real marketing push behind them and sell 10 million copies. There are only two that I know. One of them is Norah Jones, and the other is Buena Vista Social Club. Both of those records, to me, sound different. They sound three dimensional. They sound warm. They sound inviting. Most records that are made on ProTools, in a low-budget kind of way, I mean that's the reality, records have to be made, they're not objects that you grow to love. There's something about the lovability of the sound of the Norah Jones record and the Buena Vista Social Club record which to me is an integral part of why they sold

Could you talk about your disdain of [the] so-called [title] world music?

I was at a meeting in London. People wanted a place in record stores to put independent records. Record stores were putting them in bins marked 'ethnic' or 'international folk' or something like that. We were just trying to come up with a sexier bin title, something to put on one little bin divider and behind that would be all these records. So we voted for the name world music. And I have to say, in the whole history of public relations, there's never been a more successful leverage, penny for penny, than that campaign. The rules were, every record label that came to the meeting, you had to have a list of the records you wanted to put in this category. You had to pay £50 per record. I think the pot was like £2,700. We gave that to a woman who did PR. Six weeks later, the cover of the English Sunday Times weekend magazine had a picture of an African musician, and in the headline was 'world music'. Within six months, everyone all over the world was calling this stuff world music. It's the most successful campaign, I think, for the money. It was amazing.

And it is a double-edged sword, you know. People hate it but it's been a very useful tool.

Right now, in this day and age, I find world music a bit depressing, how it's evolved. I no longer enjoy going to WOMEX and sitting there and seeing a Hungarian group followed by a Cuban group followed by an Okinawan and an Irish group. It's a blur. I'd rather go to a festival in Zanzibar and hear four days of Zanzibar music made locally. But that's me. But there's another issue that I have

with it. There's so much energy put into fusions. There's so much money spent on combining a traditional musician with a modern bass player-rhythm section: the Peter Gabriel school of world music production. I don't really like that stuff, I'm more drawn to undiluted original forms of music.

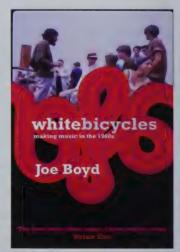
From a rational point of view, in world music, the only big successes have been acoustic and unfused: Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Cesara Evora, Nusrat Fateh Ali Kahn, although he did do one fusion record, but his success was not determined by that. The Buena Vista Social Club. These are all pure-ish. They're at least acoustic. The hand of the outside intervention is always there.

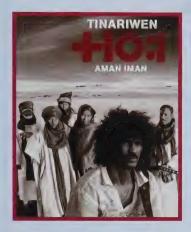
Do you have an iPod?

No. I spent a week at somebody's house and they had an iPod in a little slot and there were speakers. I couldn't get out of that room fast enough. It was so awful. I listen to my vinyl. The greatest reproduced listening experience I've ever had was one Christmas at my brother's house in Mexico. He had found a 78 rpm juke box, and we loaded it up with Duke Ellington and Django Reinhardt and Marlene Dietrich. That's the best-reproduced sound I've ever heard by far. Everything recorded

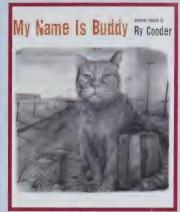
on one microphone. The more microphones you have the more diffused the technology becomes, the more complicated, the more distanced in a way.

















Plue: John Mayall Thomas Mapfumo Harry Manx & Kevin Breit Mariza Peggy Seeger Jez Lowe Blackie & The Rodeo Kings Blair Harvey Charlie Musselwhite Fairport Convention John Prine & Mac Wiseman Guy Clark James Gordon & Sons Porter Wagoner Crabtree & Mills The Holmes Brothers. The Rounders Madeleine Peyroux Wilco John Reischman & The Jaybirds David Bromberg Great Big Sea Yael Wand Doug McArthur Cousin Harley Jimmy LaFave Crowfoot Butch Hancock Dr. John Jory Nash Bob Fox James McMurtry Lucy Kaplansky John Mann Mark Davis Kris Demeaner Jorma Kaukonen Robin Laing Buille Steve Ashley Todd Snider Oisin McAuley Kleztory Screamin' Jay Hawkins Anaïs Mitchell Erika Warry Mara John Hammond Jr. Amelia Curran



Tinariwen Aman Iman: Water Is Life

With the passing on of Ali Farka Touré, Tinariwen now reign as the unquestionable high kings of the desert blues. It's official. Their last recording, Amassakoul, won the BBC Radio 3 World Music Award for Africa. Aman Iman really ought to do likewise. These nomadic Tuaregs from the Western Sahara have four lead guitarists, an ever-revolving number of vocalists, hand-clappers and percussionists, who collectively create a warm, enticing and fabulously thrilling

One of the most inhospitable environments on Earth obviously produces some of the most fertile musical minds. Singing mainly in their native Tamashek, there's a great deal of call and response that creates an easy, accessible

ambiance. There's also a superior sense of diversity at play here as they stretch themselves, from Ikyadar Dim - a raw, acoustic track with a DNA directly linked to the country blues of the Mississippi Delta - to the electric mischief created on Assouf with its rock guitar god rutting. Toumast, I might add, suggests John Lee Hooker cast a long and imposing shadow across the Sahara. Yet these western references are largely expedient, meant for convenience rather than a definitive depiction.

The wonderful, wonderful Imidiwan Winakalin, Matadjem Yinmixam and Tamatant Tilay, with their trance grooves and natural, tender, swirling vocal harmonies really have no set precedent. And yet there's massive crossover appeal on Aman Iman. Pure, unadulterated joy, after all, is universal.

- By Roddy Campbell

the song that opens this disc in a similarly incendiary fashion. Few do this music better.

- By Richard Thornley

John Wort Hannam Two Bit Suit

Black Hen Music This is the third disc from the Fort MacLeod, AB, singersongwriter, who immigrated from Jersey in the Channel Islands, U.K. He gets a little help from Steve Dawson on excellent sounding production and guitar, John Reischman on mandolin and other musicians, notably Chris Gestrin on organ. but it's mostly John Wort Hannam front and center doing his blue collar roots music. There's some very fine playing and singing and some of the songs are very good indeed. Particularly moving are Damn It Gwenivere. Wrecking Ball, and Infantryman, Another solid effort, then, from this multi-talented Albertan.

- By Barry Hammond.

Wilco Sky Blue Sky Nonesuch

Wilco was originally influential in pioneering altcountry roots in the late 1990s, but after a couple of albums ploughed new ground with their innovative and experimental rock stylings that received accolades from fans and critics alike.

With their sixth release, Sky Blue Sky, Wilco appears to have returned to their Americana roots, or to what Wilco's front man, Jeff Tweedy, calls "organic music"

Sky Blue Sky, without the trademark experimental instrumentals, or

for some, "guitar wanking", is a more sedate but brawny 12-track collection of well-constructed songs with a strong hint of Paul McCartney and Wings throughout.

Lyrically and musically this album is a definite departure. That said, Tweedy has found a comfort in this a damn-fine listen. A band can't always be on the cusp of breaking new ground. Sometimes it must step back from the edge before plunging forward. Sky Blue Sky is a brilliant, possible, interlude on which fans can fly their musical kites until Wilco spreads its musical wings again. - By Philip Harries

Steve Fisher River

Independent

It's been a long time coming, but what a treat to finally hear a solo project from Steve Fisher, one of the most tasteful and talented acoustic performers inwestern Canada. From the opening notes, it's evident this is the typical quality we've almost taken for granted from Fisher for two decades in his various bluegrass and acoustic ensembles. It could be a contender as one of the best independent Canadian roots music albums of the year.

Fisher has surrounded himself with impressive talent including Sally Van Meter on resophonic guitar, John Reischman on mandolin and Chris and Sally Jones on harmony vocals. Fisher has always been as smooth as fine scotch, both vocally and instrumentally, so only the best would do for this compendium of styles

La Part du Ouêteux Paye La Traite

Roues et Archets

There must be something in the drinking water-la belle province spitting out yet another great traditional music ensemble, La Part du Quêteux. The seasoned members include founder Stéphane Poirier on mandolin.

Michael Ayles on guitar, flute, banjo, bouzouki, and vocals: David Boulanger on fiddle, feet, and vocals; and the mighty Simon Lepage on acoustic bass and vocals. While this is only the second album for the group, it is mature and ambitious; easily a contender for Canadian folk record of the year. Chansons à répondre, complaintes,

tunes traditional and otherwise are handled with equal skill and flair. Le dimanche arrivé evokes the bleak end of Michel Faubert's repertoire while their sets of tunes would ignite the dance floor at any veillée you might care to mention. And if you ever wanted to explain the appeal of the Quebec tradition to a curious friend, look no further than Euclide, that has influenced him throughout his musical career, from fingerstyle guitar to bluegrass and Mississippi blues.

The sound quality is superb. Produced by Dave Clarke, the guitarist for the country-folk trio Steel Rail and former sideman to David Francey, engineered by Calgary's Rob Smith and mastered by Calgary's Richard Harrow, the CD has pro touches throughout. The interesting mix of songs includes John Hurt's Stack O' Lee, Mel Tillis' Walk on Boy, traditional selections like Florida Blues and the often neglected Streets of Calgary.

Inside Fisher is a little Doc Watson, a pinch of Bill Monroe, a dash of John Hurt and a whole lot of passion and honesty for the musical styles he has embraced. This CD does justice to all.

– Bob Remington

Bob Fox The Blast

Bob Fox has been around the British folk music scene since the mid '70s and was probably best known for his four-year collaboration with Stu Luckley, which ended in 1982.

Blessed with one of

British folk music. Fox has taken direction from tasteful producer John Tams and showcases it to its best advantage on The Blast. Accompanied by his own guitar, this is a lovely collection of the mostly traditional, peppered with songs by Ed Pickford, Eric Bogle, Jez Lowe and Alex Glasgow.

It's very old-school in style and presentation.

But when was the last time a version of *The Golden Vanity* was done this well? Mr. Fox perfectly proves that all you really need is a collection of good songs, a great voice and a guitar. Pure and unadulterated British folk music at its finest.

– by les siemieniuk

Harry Manx & Kevin Breit In Good We Trust Stony Plain Records

Harry Manx, as most people know by now, plays the blues with an East Indian flavour. while Kevin Breit has played with the likes of Norah Jones and Cassandra Wilson. These two very gifted guitar men combined nicely on their previous effort, Jubilee, and this latest disc sounds even hotter. Breit's song writing is getting better and better and his number, Bottom Of The Hill, on this disc can stand tall beside any other song you might wish to compare it to. Manx, too, is a mean writer and when they start off with a version of Bruce Spingsteen's I'm On Fire, and put in standards like Death Have Mercy, you get an idea of the level they aim for. Manx has a very listener-friendly voice to boot. Your ears will stand up and say: "Hot damn, these boys

- By Barry Hammond.

Nuala Kennedy The New Shoes

Compass Records
A native of Ireland,
Nuala Kennedy has
forged strong links with
Scotland and, most
recently, with Cape
Breton throughout
her adventurous and
varied career. She is a
fine flautist and also
contributes whistle
and rich vocals to this

recording.

Also featured are Marc Clement (guitar, vocals), Julian Sutton (melodeons), Mhairi Hall (piano) and Claire Mann (fiddle, flute, whistle, vocals). Among the highlights is the opening track, an energetic set of jigs grouped under the title The Pink Flamingo. Cait in Garrain a Bhile, which follows, is sung by Kennedy in Gaelic and it is a captivating performance.

The rest of the material comes from Scotland, Cape Breton and Ireland, and includes traditional and contemporary tunes. There's no attempt to modernize the music here; just strong, confident playing and a beautiful melodic sensibility which pervades every track. Excellent production by Bob Kenyan brings out the best in everyone.

- By Tim Readman

Thomas Mapfumo Rise Up

Real World In 1940, George Orwell wrote: "We are in a strange period of history in which a revolutionary has to be a patriot and a patriot has to be a revolutionary.' Listening to Thomas Mapfumo reminded me of Orwell and other true men and women of conscience who transcend orthodoxy to resist tyranny of whatever stripe. In the 1970s, Mapfumo's chimurenga ('struggle') songs were the musical voice of the armed insurrection that brought an end to white minority rule and saw ZANU assume power under Robert Mugabe. Fast forward a quarter century. Mugabe's profoundly bankrupt

regime clings to power and Mapfumo lives in exile in Oregon. Rise Up falls short of advocating tyranicide, but with lyrics like: "Why do our youth die? They die for breadcrumbs like rats and they die for 'The Party', for the senile man," I think it's fair to say that the "Lion of Zimbabwe" is doing his part to hasten Mugabe's departure.

Recordings

- By Gallagher Parkinson

Neil Young Massey Hall 1971 Reprise Neil Young & Crazy Horse At the Fillmore 1970 Reprise

Adding to the existing pile of Neil Young live releases with more archival material seems a little redundant. In addition to the copious live albums

he's released over the course of his 40-plus years as a performer, Young has relied on concert recordings of new material to fill out ostensible studio albums like Rust Never Sleeps and Tonight's the Night.

And yet the arrival of two "new" albums from the beginning of his solo career sound like a visit from an old friend, one whose stories you never get tired of hearing because some new nuance, a previously overlooked detail. keeps rearing its head. Not that Crazy Horse was ever about nuance, and the Fillmore set-all six songs of it-finds them in all their walloping glory, with original guitarist/ co-vocalist Danny Whitten stepping up to the mike for a rowdy





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Come On Baby Let's Go Downtown, as well as abetting the drawnout electric jams. If you thought the studio version of Cowgirl in the Sand ended too abruptly, you're sure to love the 16-minute version included here.

The Massey Hall concert is a quieter treat, with Young taking all 17 tracks solo, accompanying himself on acoustic guitar or piano. Along with the expected chesnuts—Old Man, Heart of Gold, Helpless-there's a spirited run at Buffalo Springfield's On the Way Home, eye-blink takes of Cowgirl In The Sand and Down by the River and a few other welcome surprises. The bonus DVD adds an atmospherically murky movie of the Massey Hall show, as well as assorted video, radio and photo ephemera from the Young archives.

- By Scott Lingley

Charlie Musselwhite Delta Hardware Real World

It came as a bit of a surprise when Musselwhite's previous album came out on Real World, not a label that one associates with the blues. Of course, it wasn't quite a typical blues album and neither is this follow-up. Delta Hardwar features his touring band but the approach isn't all that different. Unlike the previous album. however, Musselwhite wrote most of the material except for two songs by Little Walter and one by Billy Boy Arnold. Black Water is Musselwhite's commentary on the aftermath of hurricane Katrina while Invisible Ones is ostensibly

about the same

event but can also be construed as his comment on those left behind in any society.

The Real World label has set high standards for its world music productions and it's commendable that the company has made a little room for such worldly wise blues in its catalogue.

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

Blackie & the Rodeo Kings Let's Frolic Again True North

The casual jam session vibe - friends goofing around in the studio, trading vocals and guitar leads - is very much at the heart of the Blackie experience, and while they're unbeatable at making a folk fest stage or small club date warm and inclusive, they've never really pulled it off on a recording. Except, of course, on their High or Hurtin' tribute to Willie P Bennett. but that record had a purpose and a backbone to it - everything after has seemed pallid in comparison. Let's Frolic Again changes the Blackie template for the better by incorporating more original material, alternating with a quirky slate of covers running from Teenage Head's Something's On My Mind to a boozy, haphazard run through that old warhorse, Red Red Robin. The feel is still loose - lots of deliberate insertions of false starts and pre song talking - and the mode is good times, default for the three to be sure, but probably their natural state of being. The originals are great by the way, especially album opener Better Off Alive, which uses a zydeco

flavored organ riff to grab the melody to Victoria, a chorus casually taking part of Burning Love. They might very well still be the best cover band out there - if they're taking requests for the next album, and looking to expand their coverage of Canadian punk, DOA's General Strike would sound good coming out of Tom Wilson's mouth. - By Tom Murray

Blair Harvey & The Dregs Gutter Be Gutted Independent

Mothers lock up your daughters – Blair Harvey is an honest to God rebel. If song titles like I'll Drink to That and Sweet Sins don't convince you, maybe his liner notes will – he thanks both pills and detox.

The cover photo of Blair's sophomore disc represents him as a surley and sexy visionary surrounded by fetish objects - guitar, Dominion Ale, cigarettes, notebooks, records. Dylan's electric years, Crazy Horse, Bruce Springstein, and a rawer Ryan Adams come to mind. But these 15 songs come from a Newfoundland songwriter, and work against the vision people may have of a quaint Newfie port life to reveal the darker side of life on the rock. His character is not a fabrication -Blair Harvey has lived what he sings, his anger is real. References to religion and drinking have helped win over the Irish - he has already played two festivals there. Gutter Be Gutted is a rocker recommended for heavy hearts.

-By Mary Beth Carty

Angelique Kidjo Djin Djin

Razor & Tie/Starbucks Entertainment

Judging from the growing pile of rapturous reviews for this record, I may find myself in the minority suggesting you steer clear of Djin Djin - which may prove challenging given this project is a collaboration between Razor & Tie and Starbucks Entertainment; virtually assuring that it will become a fixture in the java vendor's proliferating locations. The push is definitely on. Rarely, if ever, has a world music artist marshalled such forces for an assault on the easy rock / AOR

audience. Produced by Tony Visconti and featuring Alicia Keyes, Branford Marsalis, Joss Stone, Ziggy Marley. Josh Groban and Carlos Santana, this is the veritable D-Day landing of crossover attempts. Problem is...it doesn't work. These 'collaborations' have all the subtlety of Donald Trump's 'cameo appearance' at a Hollinger shareholder meeting. Nowhere is this more evident than in the cover of Sade's Pearls. Josh Groban's lachrymose baritone and Santana's rarely restrained guitar stylings take things way way over the top. This might otherwise be forgiven, but for the fact that





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JOHN WORT HANNAM

Two Bit Suit



"He has a Gordon Lightfoot-like skill at penning songs with easy harmonies and melodies baked from the midday prairie sun ..." The Calgary Sun



LINDA MCRAE

Carve It to the Heart

From Dear John to John Deere
"...gutsy, rich in twang and
country crunch...one of the
best of this year's roots music crop"
- Toronto Sun



Sample songs online www.blackhenmusic.com

the chorus conflates - apparently without irony - the misery of an impoverished Somali woman and the pain of breaking in new footwear: "She lives a life she didn't choose / And it hurts like brandnew shoes." Perhaps it is unfair to characterize the entire CD by its weakest link, but an utterly superfluous cover of Gimme Shelter (featuring Joss Stone) and the puzzling Lonlon - a free adaptation of Ravel's Bolero - seal the deal and negate any redeeming value that might be found in this project. It's a great pity. I expected more of both Angelique Kidjo and Razor & Tie. Then again, I don't expect anything less from Starbucks. All of which matters nought, because last week I stumbled across Angelique Kidjo's performance on The Tonight Show and when it comes to shaping tastes in Middle America, I'm pretty sure Jay Leno has me beat. - By Gallagher Parkinson

James Gordon and Sons Nine Green Bottles

Borealis Records

I've written about James Gordon before and have admired his work for a long time, from his days in Tamarack to his stint on CBC's Basic Black as songwriterin-residence for five years. If he never wrote another song, his body of work would stand as one of the best creative outputs of any Canadian songwriter. But there's no

But there's no stopping him. Especially since the family firm, James Gordon and Sons, is not a greengrocer's stall but a going musical concern. Nine Green Bottles is their first outing together. James gathers his sons, Evan and Geordie (both with indie rock projects of their own), to aid and abet his songs in a youthful and energetic manner. As always from James, there are a couple of gems. Beautifully Canadian in its images, Inukshuk is a song about being lost in the city and contains the wonderful lines: "Frobisher and Franklin, when they sailed out to explore at least they knew what they were looking for" And as in every James Gordon collection, there are also a couple of great songs about the ever-changing times of small-town Ontario: Another Silver Maple Comes Down and The Moon Looks Like It's Crving.

James, your sons have done you proud with their help on this lovely record.

- by les siemieniuk

Doug Cox and Salif Bhatt with Ramkumar Mishra

Slide to Freedom NorthernBlues Music

A propitious meeting between B.C.-based dobro master Doug Cox and Salil Bhatt, scion of celebrated Indian slide genius Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, who like his father before him invented a guitar-style instrument—the 19string satvik veena, in this case-to adapt for use in Indian classical settings. Bhatt Sr. may have established the feasibility of such east-west musical hybridization in his collaborations with Ry Cooder and Jerry Douglas, but Cox, Bhatt Jr. and tabla player Ramkumar



Mishra find plenty of fertile ground to till, especially on long instrumental numbers like Bhoopali Dance and Fish Pond, which escalates from a limpid wash of resonant strings to an increasingly intense slide duel. Bhatt Sr. even chips in some mohan veena on a couple of tunes, including a version of Blind Willie Johnson's Soul of a Man. I could take or leave Cox's vocals on three of the tracks, but the rest is pure bliss.

- By Scott Lingley

John Reischman and the Jaybirds Stellar Jays

Corvus Records

The Stellar's Jay is the provincial bird of British Columbia. It is closely related to the Blue Jay, which is found east of the Rockies, but with a black head and upper body. According to Wikipedia, the most convenient source for lazy reviewers on deadline: "its calls are varied and include rattling and guttural sounds too numerous to list. Notably, its alarm call is a harsh nasal "wah"."

Like the Stellar's

Jay, the bluegrass band John Reischman and the Jaybirds is also native to western North America, with most of its members making their nests in British Columbia. As for the harsh nasal wah, one can only attest to nonbluegrass aficionados that the Jaybirds are not nearly as guilty as some others in the genre. Somewhere along the evolutionary path of bluegrass music, these birds have developed a smoother, mellower call, but still retaining a hint of that noted Kentucky warbler, Bill Monroe.

The real marvel of these birds, though, is when they take

flight instrumentally. Although adept singers and prolific songwriters, the band is so strong instrumentally that it is easy to want even more than the four all-music selections. each originals, on this CD. If you have never seen the Jaybirds live, do so. You will be hard-pressed to find better instrumentation delivered with such tightness and power.

Emperor Joseph II of Austria once complained to Mozart that the composer made too many demands on the royal ear. As scripted in the movie Amadeus: "My dear young man, don't take it too hard. Your work is ingenious. It's quality work. There are simply too many notes, that's all. Just cut a few and it will be perfect." Mozart: "Which few did you have in mind, Majesty?

The Jaybirds are





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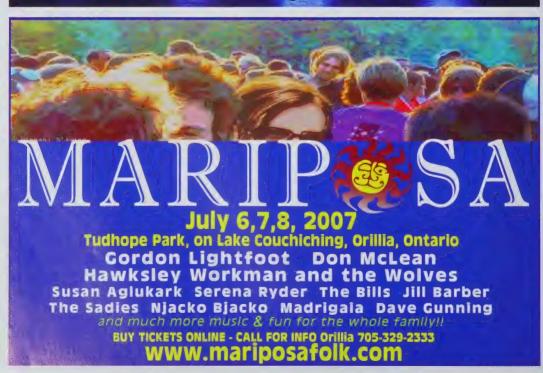
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led by Reischman. the Mozart of the mandolin, who has confounded many a budding mandolin player with "too many notes." In the original composition Bish Bash Falls by fiddler and bandmate Gregory Spatz, Reischman's mandolin solos are machine-gun rapid, with each note played with a clarity and tone that few others on his instrument can match. Spatz, banjo player Nick Hornbuckle and guitarist Jim Nunally are similarly frightening. All play with a taste and tone that is rare to find throughout all members of any one group.

Spatz and Reischman, in particular, match each other flawlessly, note-for-note, on a fiery duet in Bish Bash Falls and on several other instrumentals recorded by the 'Birds. They make too many demands on the ears of us mere mortals. but which notes would we have them cut? As the jealous composer Salieri said of his rival Mozart: "Displace one note and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase and the structure would

- By Bob Remington

Jimmy LaFave Cimarron Manifesto Red House Records

Austin singersongwriter LaFave specializes in languid country-folk with a backbeat, hinting at a lighter stroll into Buddy Miller territory, lap steel competing with barbed electric guitar and the soulful strum of an acoustic. He phrases occasionally like Dylan (or Roger McGuinn) and even cops one of the master's

songs, Not Dark Yet, complementing if not quite meeting the standards. He sketches in his songs as much as he sets anything in stone and is prone to an easy fatalism that occasionally seems rote - the curse of the literate songwriter. Still, he's got the goods - Lafave runs easily between sorrowful laments (Donovan's Catch the Wind). thoughtful political observations (This Land) and country flavored blues (Joe South's Walk a Mile in my Shoes and Don't Ask Me).

- By Tom Murray

Peggy Seeger Three Score and Ten Appleseed

This is a double CD recorded live at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall to celebrate Seeger's 70th birthday. It features a mighty cast of musicians including her brothers, Mike and Pete Seeger, Martin Carthy, Norma Waterson, Eliza Carthy, Peggy's three children (Neill, Calum and Kitty), Irene Pyper-Scott, and Billy Bragg, as well as Graham Henderson and James McNally. Classics such as First Time Ever I Saw Your Face, and Gonna Be an Engineer, and some newer songs form the repertoire for this performance. I am ambivalent about recommending this recording to readers. If you are a fan and want a keepsake to remember this historic occasion, then this is for you. At the risk of sounding disrespectful, the recording also features some weak performances by artists well past the height of their powers. Those in the know, and those with fond memories

of the past, will nod sagely and cherish every moment. If you play this for your kids they'll probably say, "Who the hell are these old fogies, and why are they on my stereo?"

— By Tim Readman

Maria Muldaur Naughty Bawdy & Blue Stony Plain

Even in the early years of her career, Muldaur came across as seductive. Well over 40 years later, Muldaur presents herself as downright naughty and the sultry persona still suits her well. Since the early '90s she has been at her most prolific and at her most consistent, having released an album a year with nary a dud in the bunch.

Naughty Bawdy & Blue is the third of a trio of CDs devoted to women blues pioneers such as Ma Rainey, Sippie Wallace, Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, Alberta Hunter and several others. Victoria Spivey wrote some very kind things about Muldaur in 1964 and

one can't help but conclude that she'd still be impressed if she were still around.

Muldaur is very ably supported by James Dapogny's Chicago Jazz Band, a lively band of the kind that usually accompanied some of the original blues ladies that Muldaur honours on this album with dignity and flair.

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

Watermelon Slim & The Workers The Wheel Man Northern Blues

Quite possibly an early contender for blues album of the year, this newest release from Watermelon Slim (aka Bill Homans). Perfection, or not far from it, Slim packs an energetic punch with the authenticity of a master - yet he's only been at it, in earnest, since the 90s. Slim assaults his blues from a learnéd perspective and, armed with National Steel, an accomplished harp

style and impassioned, Okie-dipped vocals, he nails it convincingly. His blue-collar with his complete absorption of blues tradition and, with the assistance of his equally-feral Workers, Slim transplants the past into the future, and convincingly so. This truck-driving hard case has lived the life and paid sufficient dues to sing about the blues with clear authenticity. From Wheel Man (sparring with Magic Slim) to Slip Harpo's Got Love If You Want It, Slim blends equal parts rawness and ferocity, his band suffusing pain with energy. While electric blues like Black Water and Rattlesnake may seduce many a new fan, it's the simplicity of his solo acoustic efforts on Jimmy Bell and the a cappella Sawmill Holler that best prove Slim's mettle, foreshadowing a smart approach to a tired game that stands to rejuvenate the category.

- By Eric Thom





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Jez Lowe Jack Common's Anthem Tantobie Records

Richard Thompson called Jez Lowe "the best songwriter to come out of England in a long time." Who am I to argue with Mr. Thompson. Especially since I agree - wholeheartedly. Plus, Lowe has perhaps the most personable and likeable singing voice ever. Wonderfully guided by producer Steve Knightly of Show of Hands, on Jack Common's Anthem Jez delivers 11 great new songs chronicling the uncommon common lives of the people of the British Isles. Besides lyrics that tell stories, the instrumentation guitars, citterns, fiddles and mandolins - is gently gorgeous.

Of all the beautiful ballads, *Taking On Men*, a song of the British shipyards, especially stands out. For someone living in Alberta through a phenomenal time of plentiful work, the cry "They're taking on men" resonates – as does it's final warning. You can't go wrong with this lovely effort. – by les siemieniuk

The Holmes Brothers State of Grace

Alligator

At this point, there's little doubt the Holmes Brothers (bassist/ vocalist Sherman Holmes, guitarist/ pianist/vocalist Wendell Holmes and drummer/ vocalist Popsy Dixon) could record an album of fast-food restaurant jingles and find a way to infuse it with the soulfulness and joy they seem to bring to whatever material they put their hands to. State of Grace

doesn't stoop that low for repertoire, but it certainly encompasses an eclectic swath of cover tunes alongside its gospel-inflected originals, ranging from Hank Williams to CCR to Nick Lowe (by way of Elvis Costello) to Cheap Trick (a swaying, churchified take on I Want You to Want Me) to Lyle Lovett. Distinguished guests include Levon and Amy Helm, Joan Osborne and Rosanne Cash, but it's the seasoned voices and spare, exacting grooves of the core unit that carry the album over 14 tracks.

- By Scott Lingley

Crasdant Dwndwr: The Great Noise

Sain Records

A great rain of religious revivalism swept over the British Isles and Scandinavia in the 1800's damning folk tunes, fiddles, and dancing to the Devil's inferno. By the time the sunshine of hedonism, or common sense, shone forth again, the world had changed much, and many folk traditions had perished.

The Welsh group Crasdant seeks to redress that loss. This is a band that does its homework. Much of the band's repertoire is derived from manuscripts housed in the Welsh National Library in Aberystwyth. The album notes, in Welsh and English, inform us not only which manuscript provided each tune, but the geneology of its owners.

Welsh folk dance is inseparable from harp music. The tunes on *The Great Noise* encompass jigs and hornpipes, played beautifully on Welsh triple harp (a subset of the harp family), accordion, guitar, flute and pipes. The production is immaculate – the sound rich and present and balanced.

However, after a while that balance becomes a bit homogenized and the tunes seem to blend one into another with similar textures and tempos, and since there are no vocals, the disc recedes into background music.

The musicians all have thorough pedigrees in traditional Welsh music and everything is well done, including the instructional DVD. A good reference for Welsh folk seekers, but not much of a rouser.

— By Lark Clark

Jory Nash Folk Jazz Blues & Soul Thin Man Records

This man has a voice of velvet. If the whole album was just voice and guitar, I would be satisfied, but Jory adds other instruments to develop his canvases. Maritime ex-pats, like myself, will get all nostalgic upon the mention of Halifax in Back to Mono (even though

he's saying "Get me out of Halifax" - but the dreamy pedal-steal and harmonies are so pretty). Careful How You Break My Heart and Oh Baby Call will have cry-at-movietypes sobbing. Long Black Train is a bit more upbeat - but Fly Me to the Moon takes us back to bittersweet romance and nostalgic swing jazz. Everything Feels Right is a radio friendly happy tune and Goin' Down to Town is the only real bluesy tune here. I don't see how Folk Jazz Blues & Soul is the best title - this collection really solidifies the Jory Nash style more than anything, and is Jory's most personal, cohesive, and professional album to date.

- By Mary Beth Carty

Crabtree & Mills Flight of Fancy

Free and Easy Music
Late bloomers always
seem to be sources of
inspiration, especially
when the arts are
concerned. Joanne
Crabtree pursued a
music career of sorts
in Toronto from 1960

to 1966, after which

psychotherapist. A few

she worked as a

years ago. Paul Mills backed her up on a first CD and now they're a full-fleldged musical duo. Each of their sons provides the rest of the accompaniment.

The warmth of Crabtree's voice and the ease with which she performs a wide range of material brings to mind Penny Lang. Aside from half a dozen Crabtree originals, the duo does a good job with songs drawn from such disparate sources as the soundtrack of The Border, Stephen Foster (Oh Susanna), Cole Porter (Miss Otis Regrets), Rodgers and Hart (a funny gem called To Keep My Love Alive). and Kieran Kane (Somewhere in the Middle).

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

Marah Sooner or Later in Spain Yep Roc Yep

Although they may not be synonymous with the folk scene, this five-man roots-rock band from Philadelphia has caught the ears of the likes of Bruce Springsteen and Nick Hornby. Marah brings a raw and folk-like











Andy Palacio and the Garifuna Collective • Corb Lund and the Hurtin' Albertans • David Francey • D.Rangers Devon Allman's Honeytribe • Dya Singh • Ellika and Solo • Eric Nagler Faduma • Fathead • Galant tu Perds ton Temps • Grada • Hugo Torres Jim Byrnes and the Sojourners • John Mann • Kinsey Report Les Gitans de Sarajevo • Lil Brian and the Zydeco Travelers • T. Nile Los de Abajo • Kiran Ahluwalia • Luke Doucet • Matt Andersen Mia Dyson • Michael Franti and Spearhead • Nick Moss & the Fliptops Norman Foote • Paperboys • Mihirangi • PF Sloan • Pointer Sisters Rachelle van Zanten • Redeye • Ruthie Foster • Siegel-Schwall Band Reno Jack and Sunday Wilde • Rev Peyton's Big Damn Band • Mighty Popo Silk Road • That 1 Guy • TOFU • Vargas Blues Band • Xavier Rudd Washboard Chaz Blues Trio • Zubot • Dawson • Paul Oscher and Art Napoleon and much more.

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delivery to their songs that, by the truest sense, is music for the folk. Best known for their live shows, Marah play with a refreshing honesty and fervour. Tear away the electric guitars and throw in a banio or two. Sooner or Later in Spain lets it all hang out. This compilation includes five live bonus tracks and a guest appearance from bestselling author Hornby (High Fidelity, About a Boy). It's a great introduction for those who have not seen Marah, and for those who have it's a brilliant snapshot!

- By Philip Harries

Porter Wagoner Wagonmaster

Anti

Left behind by Dolly Parton as she went for the pop-country brass ring, Wagoner still managed to keep up in the '70s and '80s by sticking fairly close to traditional country homilies, mild honky tonk, two steppers and novelty numbers. That kind of thing guarantees you a spot in Branson, but it doesn't allow for much artistic latitude - he's essentially been a time warp of a performer, neither here nor there when compared to some of his compatriots. Having Anti (home of both Tom Waits and Merle Haggard) step up to ensure that Wagonmaster doesn't flop into self parody or Nashville cheese is a good move, as is the choice of Marty Stuart for producer. The production and song choices (Satan's River, Eleven Cent Cotton) are traditional, with a rough hewn feel appropriate to the venture, the playing immaculate and soulful

- check out the pedal steel on The Late Love of Mine - and Wagoner sounds invigorated by the respectful attention. He's no Merle, or Waylon, or even Roger Miller, but he's got miles of experience shining through that voice - check out the last track on the album, Wagoner and Stuart chatting while strumming guitars, eventually settling into a friendly take on Men With Broke Hearts, segueing into a version of I Heard That Lonesome Whistle Blow that can only be sung by someone who's actually been on that particular train.

- By Tom Murray

Jeremy Fisher Goodbye Blue Monday Aquarius

If Paul Simon had the good sense to team up with the Monkees instead of Art Garfunkel, the resulting product would be rather like that of Jeremy Fisher.

His poppiness is bouncy and fun and belies the depth and character of his lyrics. The efforts in diversity never leave the listener thinking that there is too much to digest. The subtlety of the auxiliary instruments supplies a richness without being busy. At last, a record produced by Hawksley Workman that doesn't sound like a Hawksley Workman record!

Fisher has been known to ride his bicycle from gig to gig, town to town, coast to coast. You'd expect a little politics within the messages of this kind of songwriter. With the exception of one over-used cliché in the final track, he wears his philosophies on his sleeve with appropriate poetic style. A treat to see live as well.

- By Chris Martin



Ry Cooder My Name Is Buddy Nonesuch

Consider this the audio equivalent of George Orwell's Animal Farm, Ostensibly packaged as a children's tale, complete with hardcover binding, it tells of the Great Depression-era adventures of Buddy Red Cat, Lefty Mouse and the Reverend Tom Toad. But pay attention to the graphic for the first track - a pencil drawing of Karl Marx's Das Kapital. Beside it rests a button that reads "Free Mooney". While it's not specified, Tom Mooney was a socialist and a labour and anti-war activist wrongly jailed for murder in 1916. He spent 23 years in prison before being pardoned in 1939.

The lyrics are just as subtle and poignant. Cooder has, essentially, wrapped My Name Is Buddy in tales of "labour, big bosses, farm failures, strikes, company cops ... the America of yesteryear" in defiant, if sometimes blunt, allegory.

As a wiser man than me once said, "the past didn't go anywhere". And many of these issues – homelessness, failing family farms and racism – are still relevant today. The bold title track even propagates environmental challenges.

Oddly enough, though, this record has gone right over the

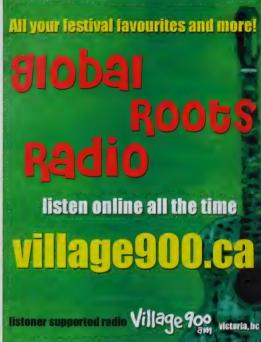
heads of many critics, who found it frivolous due to the main characters being animals. But, you'll recall, Cooder was prosecuted and fined \$25,000 by the Bush administration for recording the *Buena Vista Social Club* in Cuba. Progressive political commentary in today's radically conservative America simply attracts frenzied commentary from the powerful, reactionary, right-wing media. Just ask the Dixie Chicks or Michael Moore

Backed by the likes of Pete and Mike Seeger, Bobby King and Terry Evans, Paddy Moloney of The Chieftains and Flaco Jiménez, Cooder delves into the real roots of Americana as he revisits the acoustic musical legacy left by the likes of Woody Guthrie, the Carter Family, Hank Williams, the Staple Singers, Bukka White, Billie Holiday, Snooks Eaglin... Indeed, Eaglin's One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer provides the dark inspiration for the electoral fraud perpetrated on One Cat, One Vote, One Beer. Three Chords And The Truth sings the praises of labour and civil rights activists Joe Hill, Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger: They took Pete Seeger before the law and put him on the witness stand/ But he stood right up to tyranny with just a banjo in his hand. Stirring stuff. All told, My Name Is Buddy is a beam of bright light in these darkest of political days. - By Roddy Campbell

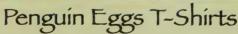


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Kelly and David As the Twilight Auguries

Independent Although songs and instruments are of the folk ilk, when this recording went to the mixer, it got all EO-ed, delayed, and panned. Fun with Cubase? Perhaps. A California duo who met in New York ten years ago, Kelly and David could perhaps be described as the Velvet Underground of folk music. Instruments are not played with particular expertise and their voices are not remarkable, but it's the artistry that counts

Fairport Convention

here - the poetry, the

atmosphere, the feeling.

- By Mary Beth Carty

Sense of Occasion Matty Grooves

When you are the inventor of a genre of music over forty years ago it is no surprise that others have made some improvements. So this is the case with the great Fairport Convention. But they do still own their history and this is their strongest album this decade.

Sense of Occasion sparks a renewed enthusiasm and it's Chris Leslie who has come into his own adding five new songs out of the sixteen tracks. He also shares lead vocal duties acting as the foil between the 'olde' and the new Fairport. This, then, adds an overall freshness to the material and gives frontman Simon Nicol a well deserved break and adds variety to the selections. Leslie wrote Keep Turning the Wheel and Spring Song that I expect are

destined to become a further part of Fairport history. Nicol and Dave Pegg are the keepers of the tradition, bringing back re-workings of 1968's Tam Lin and 1973's Polly on the Shore from their glory days. They are the workhorses of the genre. And they still have a lot to give. If it wasn't for Fairport Convention (in all it's incarnations) young punks like Seth Lakeman or Jim Moray would be re-working Beatles songs. So add another keeper to an arsenal that musters over fifty recordings. - By Tom Coxworth

Guy Clark Best of the Sugar Hill Years

Sugar Hill Records

There is probably a list a mile long of songwriters who would jump at the chance to sit down and write a song with Guy Clark. You wouldn't expect that co-writing would be in favour for such an intimate artform. The growth of a true craftsman, however, is often broadened by the experience of collaboration.

Clark has not teamed up with the most prominent of names for this set of gems. What he has done, as witnessed by the quality of the work, is associate with very like-minded tunesmiths. The trust is in the songs.

In a different time, when music was afforded a wider scope on the commercial charts, Guy Clark had more than his share of hits through voices like Ricky Scaggs, John Conlee, Rodney Crowell and Johnny Cash. From Jerry Jeff Walker in 1973 to Brad Paisley in 2005, Clark

tunes have been the choice of all manner of chart toppers. You might expect this issue to favour those tracks. In the truest effort to present the art of the man, the tracks on this disc rather favour a time when the quality of the music meant more than the dollars it generated.

- By Chris Martin

Lucy Kaplansky Over The Hills Red House Records

Lucy Kaplansky is a veteran New York folk artist with five previous discs, not to mention her work with Richard Shindell and Dar Williams in Cry Cry Cry. She lives up to her reputation by having a lovely, moving voice, writing gorgeous songs with her writing partner, Richard Litvin, and picking great covers by the likes of June Carter Cash, Loudon Wainwright III, Ian Tyson, and Julie Miller. She also commands the love and respect of some great musicians who play on this disc along side her the likes of Eliza Gilkyson, Buddy Miller, and the aforementioned

Richard Shindell. These kind of guys don't come out for just anybody and Lucy Kaplansky is simply a great talent, deserving of that respect. A fine, fine, disc.

- By Barry Hammond.

Butch Hancock War And Peace Two Roads Records

If art has the potential to reflect the time in which it was created, this disc would certainly stand as a mark of the first decade of the 21st century. And if art is to hold up over time, it must have some aspect of longeyity.

While Butch Hancock as a songwriter does not stand solidly shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Woodie Guthrie, he does approach the status of Pete Seeger. However blatant or obvious, Hancock conveys a message validated by honesty, musicality and an age that reaches back to the time when this kind of stuff was original.

Other than fellow Flatlander harmonizers Joe Ely and Jimmie Dale Gilmore on a pair of tunes, and some work from man-about-guitar Rob Gjersoc. Hancock has created a labour of love on all other instruments. On this front he may have been better served to put the music before the message.

- By Chris Martin

John Prine & Mac Wiseman Standard Songs for Average People Oh Boy Records

This is a disc that's as comfortable as your favourite old sweatshirt. John Prine and legendary bluegrass singer Mac Wiseman team up with a host of great Nashville session players, including Kenny Malone on drums, Lloyd Green on pedal steel, and Jack Clement, Jamie Hartford (John's son), Tim O'Brian, Ronnie McCourt (Del's son) and many others to cover 14 standards like Old Rugged Cross, In The Garden, Old Cape Cod, Pistol Packin' Mama and Blue Eved Elaine. Sweet and mellow is the order of the day. Both performers focus their attention on the vocals, rather



than their instruments, playing only a little acoustic guitar each on a couple of tracks, but their well-worn, gently lived in voices sound wonderful. Both songs and performers may be oldies but they're goodies.

- By Barry Hammond.

Little Axe Stone Cold Ohio

Little Axe is Skip
McDonald (aka
Bernard Alexander)
with longtime cohorts
Doug Wimbish and
Keith LeBlanc, whose
working relationship
dates back to the early
days of the Sugar
Hill label. Coated in
the decidedly dub-by
feel that immediately
marks this as an Adrian
Sherwood production,

Stone Cold Ohio is situated in profoundly swampy territory (is Ohio swampy?) between country blues. gospel and...something else. Rockin' Shoes is both my favourite track and wholly typical of what Little Axe is all about. It lopes along, with a call and response between Skip and his choir that's suggestive of both a Sunday sermon and a chain gang. Meanwhile, an eerily familiar organ line plays under the vocals, threatening at any moment to break out into Superstition. The whole thing is wrapped up in Sherwood's characteristically reverb rich On-U sound. Only one thing nags...Moby credits Little Axe as an influence on his

massively successful 1999 CD Play, and the debt is HUGE. As a listener coming to Little Axe post-Play, I really wish I could wind back the clock and hear this wonderful hybrid fresh, untainted by the sonic legacy of Moby's multitudinous TV licensing deals.

- By Gallagher Parkinson

Mark Davis Don't You Think We Should Be Close? Saved by Radio Mark Davis Mistakes I Meant To Make

Saved by Radio

Honest, confident and broadminded. Those are the first three words jotted down after my first back-to-back spin of Mark Davis' twoalbum tour de force. Both beautifully if forebodingly packaged, Don't You Think We Should Be Close? and. Mistakes I Meant To Make, are in a way reflections of each other. We can see why he allayed the need to release two distinct yet interwoven collections. Part one sees Davis backed by a who's who of hurtin' albertans, old reliables (couldn't resist) and the sweet voices of Romi Mayes and Sarah Wheeler -a kind of group hug for Davis' fractured and forlorn confessions. But it's on Mistakes

I Meant To Make that the stark and enigmatic archetypal imagery suggested on the CD jackets is truly delivered in both song and sound. Here Davis' laments are stripped bare only to be

backed succinctly by the singular fellowship of Jav Crocker who lightly burnishes tracks like In On Me with implements from his toolshed of vocals, keyboards and guitars. The result is a rainy day/Sunday morning set of tunes that ride the rails between Davis' own heartbreaking The Gradual Moment (Old Reliable) and the ranch-folk of a younger Ian Tyson.

- By Dennis Lenarduzzi

Crowfoot As the Crow Flies

A crow has three toes, this band has three members, but more than three musical directions. To the untrained ear. Crowfoot will be, uh,



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pigeon holed, (cough) as "trad." But this disc is comprised almost entirely of their own instrumental compositions. Such sub-genres as Celtic. Québecois, and Jewish are evident upon an absent-minded listen. but closer attention reveals classical. jazz, blues, and even jam-band influences. Arrangements are delicate, intricate, soaring. And is that amazing flute player also the accordion player? Yes! And the genius guitarist also plays cittern! And the incredible violinist plays cello! Nicholas Williams, Adam Broome, and Jaige Trudel are not only technical masters and creative composers, but heart-players who give and give. The amount of love that emerges from their instruments is confounding. And comforting. Two songs demonstrate Adam Broome's chameleon vocals and the others' capacity to sing sweet back-ups. Go Crowfoot go! Three crow-thumbs up! - By Mary Beth Carty

The Rounders Wish I Had You

Blind Pig Something fresh from

Oklahoma City this way comes - in the form of blues-rockers. The Rounders. Their unique stance on the blues embraces a lot of familiar territory - British blues, Delta country blues, Chicago blues, Americana roots, Southern rock with jamband tendencies - but blend these influences together to create give birth to something thoroughly unique and wholly ear-catching.

The ingredients are found in an exceptional singer - Brian Whitten, the dual guitar attack of Ryan Taylor and Michael Stone, a rocksolid rhythm section in drummer Stuart Williamson and bassist Dave Spindle, plus some intrusive harp genius from guest Dustin Arbuckle. Their resulting sound is anything but derivative and, thanks to standout tracks like Wish I Had You, "You Know Better Than That" and especially "Through No Fault of My Own" you can appreciate that this crackerjack outfit are on to something quite different and something very good, indeed. If you think the disc's cover stands out - that's nothing compared to the surprises you'll find inside.

- Eric Thom

The Kennedys Songs of the Open Road

Appleseed.

What can one say

— it's all covers! Pete
and Maura Kennedy
have taken 14 of their
favourite songs they
like to listen to while
touring and came up
with their ninth release:
songs of the Open
Road.

This Northampton, Mass., duo still tours extensively, and also hosts the Dharma Café show on Sirius Satellite Radio (Channel 24). Songs of the Open Road is highlighted by Maura's rich voice, fluid harmonies and robust musical arrangements, and for the most part is a satisfying listen. But this collection doesn't bring any new twists to some really strong standards like the Byrds' Eight Miles High, Dylan's A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, the Flying Burrito Brothers' Sin City or Jimmy Webb's



Galveston. songs of the Open Road is a good eclectic compilation disc for the car, but lacks the bite and edge of the originals.

- By Philip Harries

Will Kimbrough Americanitis Daphne Records

"I would never bite the hand that has me by the balls." This line alone says everything you need to know about the direction Will Kimbrough has taken with this release. A disc full of songs, to one, might seem like a political manifesto - poetically set to music - to another. The reason is in the ear of the beholder. Bouncy pop, civilwar drum marches, grinding guitar rock, beat-poet minimalism, all are vehicles to carry the voice of Kimbrough into your consciousness.

Is it just me, or are we in the midst of another protest movement? The upstarts of the '20s and '60s carried their slogans on banners at large public gatherings. The '00s is a more discreet time, it would appear, until now. The music may just be gearing up but will the people follow along? – By Chris Martin

Madeleine Peyroux Half The Perfect World Rounder Records

Madeleine Peyroux's 1996 debut album. Dreamland, elicited high praise and widespread notice. Then, silence. She returned to busking on the streets. Eight years later Peyroux's second album, Careless Love, was again greeted with warm approval. And now comes Half The Perfect World.

In an era of graphically sexual pop anthems, Half The Perfect World is an album of complex love songs. While her previous recordings had a retro jazz bias, Peyroux now widens her scope to include Tom Waits, Joni Mitchell, two songs by Leonard Cohen, and four originals, co-written with Jesse Harris and Larry Klein. The good news: they work.

The opening song, *I'm* All Right, establishes the beauty of the

arrangements, all laid back and precise at the same time. Dean Parks' vamping guitar and Sam Yahel's brilliant Wurlitzer and Hammond keyboards couldn't be tastier. From the very first notes, the album offers an appealing invitation to come in and get comfortable.

Peyroux's stylistic resemblance to Billie Holiday surely can't be accidental, but she has a little less heartache to her tone, and we do like our retro. Peyroux inhabits a world of sensuous sadness and poetic introspection. Her sense of cool melancholy rings true.

There are more than a few moments of perfection on this album, and when I listen to her version of the Joni Mitchell's *River*, sung in duet with k d lang, I have to keep my hankie handy.

Everybody's Talkin' was a hit for Nilsson, and embedded in our memories through its use as the theme for the 1969 film Midnight Cowboy. Here Peyroux takes the song for her own, underlining one

of the album's strong points: Pevroux's sensitive interpretations and the band's superlative attention to detail honours the integrity of the songs.

She inhabits Leonard Cohen's lyrics on Blue Alert. Less effective is her treatment of Tom Wait's Heart Of Saturday Night. On it, her delicacy becomes anemic, insufficient to wipe out our identification with the divine incongruity of what Tom Waits calls singing

That aside, this album is a keeper. Producer Larry Klein's dedication to surrounding Peyroux with great players, and a repertoire that balances original compositions with fresh interpretations of near-universal favourites, point to a very long career for Madeleine Peyroux and

wonderful surprises ahead for us, as well. - By Lark Clark

David Bromberg Try Me One More Time Appleseed

Years ago Bromberg decided to put most of his energy into making fine violins. Now. 17 years after his last recording, he's back with a new album. one that features him performing mostly old blues and traditional songs, the title song, an original, being an exception.

While the simple sketch of Bromberg that appears on the booklet cover is a direct throwback to the artist's very first album from 1971, there's quite a difference in the musical approach. As he states, this is not a "fussed over" record. The only

accompaniment consists of his guitar.

Bromberg's playing has always been beyond reproach but his singing has become steadier and his voice slightly richer over the years. While the album is unlikely to attract many new fans, those who remember him fondly may indeed be ready to take him up on the offer suggested in the title.

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

John Németh Magic Touch Blind Pig

John Németh is blessed with a remarkably emotive voice, and is a very competent harmonica player to boot. The tracks that especially stand out draw much of their inspiration from soul and R&B, and the fact that producer

Anson Funderburgh makes judicious use of the Texas Horns imparts a sense of class to the overall sound.

His friend, Junior Watson, plays lead guitar. The songs, mostly originals by Németh, probably aren't destined to become classics but Magic Touch still has much to recommend.

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

Robin Laing One For The Road Greentray

Robin Laing is a lucky man. He has a real passion for Scotland's greatest invention and its most successful export - Scotch whisky - and he makes a good part of his living singing about it, writing about it and attending whisky-tasting events, where he entertains the connoisseurs.

This is his third album of whisky songs, following on the heels of The Angels' Share and The Water of Life, and a charming collection it is, too. Highlights are World of Whisky, Spevside Whisky, and The Whisky Makes You Sweeter. Robin has a light touch and a penchant for gentle and lyrical melodies. This is the musical equivalent of a fine, well-aged single malt; something to be savoured during life's peaceful moments.

- By Tim Readman

Lauren MacColl When Leaves Fall Make Believe Records

MacColl was the winner of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award in 2005. She is steeped in traditional Highland Scots music, having been a Scottish





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dancer from a young age. She graduated to the summer schools of the Feisean movement in Ross-shire where her self-taught fiddling was honed until her distinctive sound developed. She has a unique style, graceful and elegant, agile and uplifting, and is capable of rattling through the quicker tunes with the best of them, whilst playing the slowest of airs with intense feeling and palpable passion.

Her trio includes Barry Reid (guitar) and James Ross (piano), and they provide the perfect backing for her playing. A stand-out recording. – By Tim Readman

Oisin McAuley Far from the Hills of Donegal

Compass Records

County Donegal's Oisin McAuley is known to most of us as the fiddler in that fine Irish traditional group, Danu. That alone should get you interested in this CD; you won't be disappointed if it does. It's a fine blend of traditional Celtic. jazz, classical and bluegrass influences. The accompanying musicians are Tony Byrne on guitar, Shane McGowan (no, not that one!) on guitar. Peter Browne on button accordion, Peter Molloy on flute and Angus McAuley on cello. The Con Cassidy set of tunes is outstanding, with McAuley's fiddle leading the charge as the band surges behind him. On Tune for Gillian, the jazz and classical influences shine through. Paddy Fahey's set is bounced along by the grooving guitar of McGowan.

An eclectic CD then, featuring some of

McAuley's own tunes and a host of others collected from all over the place. Highly recommended.

- By Tim Readman

Dr. John Trader John's Crawfish Soiree Spy Records

This double CD collection contains two hard to find records that were first released on Australian AIM label in the 1990's. The first disc has demos of songs that became Dr. John's first Los Angeles album, Zu Zu Man, in 1965 and the second disc is made up of rare and unreleased 1970's studio tracks. The sound on both has been cleaned up considerably and, except for a slight hollow boominess. both discs sound pretty decent. There's no notes on the backup personnel, which includes a tight rhythm section and very funky horn section, but there's good liner notes on Dr. John himself by Martin Celmins. Good value for fans of the good doctor, New Orleans music, or funky

R & B in general.By Barry Hammond.

Yael Wand

At Your Door Reduction Road Music

At Your Door is a concept album that bares the inner soul of the artist; delivered in the jazzy, sassy sauce that Yael spreads across her music. Yael Wand is making a statement for the classically trained voice in folk music. A native of Haifa, Israel, her songs bring us back to the pre-war cabaret music that was so new then and appreciated now.

At Your Door is as much a showcase of her fine vocal talent as it is for her beguilling lyrics, a charismatic folk-jazz album that hugs the listener and won't let go as it transcends the boundaries between folk, jazz and worldly influences. Seasonal themes offer little vignettes that weave their way around outstanding instrumental work.

Wildflower, Restlessness, and Moonshine Maker are definite highlights in an album of finely crafted songs.

- By John Roman

John Hammond When Push Comes to

Back Porch

Forty-four years of growling out the blues hasn't reduced John Hammond's intensity or love of the medium. Recorded in analog in this digital age, and produced by rap/blues artist G-Love, who was born long after Hammond started his career, this fine disc has the swampy feel of an old Muddy Waters record. G-Love, who has idolized Hammond since his teen years, adds some guitar licks and even contributes You're just Like Butter. And Hammond, who did an entire disc of Tom Waits tunes, includes Waits' Cold Water here. Another great effort by the man who has brought us some of the best blues anywhere for so many years.

- By Mike Sadava

John Mayall In the Palace of the King

Eagle Records

How apt that one of the fathers of blues in Britain would dedicate an entire disc to the late Texas bluesman Freddie King. Mayall, was at the forefront of the British blues invasion of the late '60s, teaming up



with Eric Clapton to form the unforgettable Bluesbreakers. He's now 73, and can this pensioner sing the blues, play keyboards, harmonica and guitar and put together a smokin' band. And yes, pay homage to the big man from Texas with King of the Kings, as well as starting off with a Freddie King song, You Know that You Love Me.

- By Mike Sadava

Kris Demeanor Go Away (With Me) Independent Kris Demeanor

The Guilt and The Shame: Tales of the Canadian West Independent

OK folks, hang on to your hats – a mighty wind of superlatives is coming your way. And at the risk of sounding like a homer – Kris is from Calgary, as am I, so I have seen him grow musically over the years – the man, seriously, is the

best thing going in Canadian music these days. Musically adventurous and lyrically stunning. both these albums are superb. Go Away (With Me) is a collection of 11 wonderfully beautiful and singable songs about explorers, pit ponies and dead men, among other topics. Besides his Crack Band of Diane Kooch, Peter Moller and Chantal Vitalis, Kris is joined by Carolyn Mark, Vede Hille and Kim Barlow. Go Away (With Me) is fabulous.

The Guilt and Shame:
Tales of the Canadian
West, is a series of,
for lack of a better
description, spoken-word
pieces. It is amazing
— don't be scared, there's
plenty of good music
involved as well — and
a great listen. From a
conversation with Dr.
Meat, a doctor from
Iraq who works in a
ramshackle convenience
store. to the beaver

family that thinks it's spring, he sees the world in a quirkily honest way, offering humour and hope in the most dire of situations: The whole family is out of the lodge/Licking and shaking themselves out of the slumber/A lethal treat after a short sleep/Rodents are eager and God is a joker/By Monday, the river will be frozen back over/ Any of them caught too far downstream/Will be as dead as today's beautiful dream/But the seasonal dislocation will be an aberration/ The seasonal dislocation will be an aberration/ No more'

If you want to label Kris's style, perhaps urban folk will do. All I know is I get the greatest pleasure out of listening to the ruminations of his mind, mostly because

I cannot predict where he is going musically or lyrically, but love it when he gets there. You have to hear these two recordings. Trust me - your life will be the better and more interesting for it.

- by les siemieniuk

Anaïs Mitchell The Brightness Righteous Babe

"Turn it off, it sucks!" was how Anaïs Mitchell's debut for Ani DiFranco's Righteous Babe imprint was greeted by my spouse, which behooves me to note that the Vermont native has one of those love-it-or-hate-it girly warbles reminiscent (but not derivative) of Victoria Williams or Joanna Newsom. I should also note that my reaction to her vocal style was not so strong that I couldn't appreciate the deep-folk grounding

and poetic intelligence of her songcraft, attuned as she is to mythic imagery and the roll of the seasons. Even at her most ambitious, though, Mitchell never sacrifices the shivery sense of intimacy her plaintive voice and the parsimonious arrangements confer in songs like Of a Friday Night and Out of Pawn, the latter a bittersweet love story set against the backdrop of a drowning New Orleans. Quite lovely.

- By Scott Lingley

Valdy and Gary Fjellgaard Contenders II - Still in the Running

Stony Plain

Still in the Running showcases folk-country icons Valdy and Gary Fjellgaard. Affectionately known as the Contenders, these gentlemen are longtime friends and active performers on the folk club and festival circuit.

They are Canadian troubadours who meld close harmonies with fine instrumental work and great song material. Fjellgaard sharpened his pencil to write a number of the choice tracks including For the Love of It, Billy Miner, The Fever, and the title track.

John Prine's Speed of the Sound of Loneliness, Troy Seal and Edward Setser's Seven Spanish Angels and Ian Tamblyn's Bay Of Sails are fine additions to the album's song list.

Contenders II is a fitting continuum to the Contenders library and I trust it will not be the last because these guys are Still in the Running.

- By John Roman

Doug McArthur Thunder Into Heaven Patio Records

This is Doug's eighth recording in a career spanning more than 30 vears. In Thunder Into Heaven he sings of life and love in a mature and heartfelt way. Life is an interesting journey for us all, but it's always a pleasure to listen to an articulate and mature artist talk about theirs.

Doug enlisted Ian Tamblyn to produce half the songs and the results sound beautiful, with simple, sparse

- yet surprisingly full instrumentation. In Letter to Marie, a song of WWI, Doug, accompanied only by a haunting piano, reaches a brutal depth and shakes you to the core. Just beautifully done.

Doug McArthur's world is well worth







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visiting and Thunder Into Heaven is well worth listening to. - by les siemieniuk

Jorma Kaukonen Stars In My Crown

Red House Records Former founding member of The

Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna, Jorma Kaukonen continues to pursue the acoustic guitar path with this collection of spiritual songs with backgrounds from Reggae, to Gospel and Blues, including several that are selfpenned. Among the other songwriters represented are Reverend Gary Davis, Lightning Hopkins, Johnny Cash and Roy Book Binder. While his voice is a little light to be a really great blues singer, its got a comfortable, worn tone that works. There's some tasty bluesy, jazzy picking by Kaukonen, and Barry Mitterhoff on mandolin and bouzouki. As pleasantly pleasing an acoustic disc as you're likely to hear.

- By Barry Hammond.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins I Shake My Stick at You

Screamin' Jay Hawkins made his name by doing just that --- screaming. His big hit, I Put a Spell on You, was recorded, according to legend, when Hawkins and his entire band were drunk as skunks. Starting in the early days of R & B, he could have been a solid performer with his trained voice, but he decided to go the route of the novelty act. This album, recorded in Australia about eight years before his death in 2000, starts off promising

with a Louis Jordan type of jump swing, but soon deteriorates to masterpieces like Furburger. It's enough to make you get up and scr-e-e-e-am.

- By Mike Sadava

Kleztory

Nomade Amerix

Kleztory combines the talents of classically trained Russian immigrants Airat Ichmouratov (clarinet) and Elvira Misbakhova (violin) with Henri Oppenheim (accordion), whose background is Polish, and Alain Legault (guitar) from Montreal and Mark Peetsma (double bass) from Calgary. Don't let their classical training fool you, though. The group can get down dirty and chop wood in the mud with the peasants anytime, including adding street noises to Hutchison Street Khosidl and raucous shouts and whistles to the Andy Statman composed, Andy's Ride. The music is passionate, emotional, sometimes humorous, always spirited and technically accomplished. This debut disc is a definite

keeper. - By Barry Hammond.

Todd Snider Peace, Love, and Anarchy

Oh Boy! Records This is Todd Snider's tenth release - a collection of pithy and wry odds and ends of self-awareness and offbeat experiences. Best known for his humorous. but original, Talkin Seattle Grunge Rock Blues, Snider has built up a strong following with his unique, sardonic humour and social commentary. For Snider's fans, Peace, Love and Anarchy is a compilation of songs

and demos that might be well received; however, the first-time listener may not see it the same way. It has a few gems like Nashville or Barbie Doll, where he comically calls a woman with no heart a Barbie doll. But as strong as this set of quirky songs is, the album is plagued with a few duds that could scare away many potential new listeners. But, what's peace and

love without a bit of anarchy? - By Philip Harries

Buille Buille

Compass Records

I hate that cliché when people get called "the Jimi Hendrix of the penny whistle" or whatever. Niall Vallely could well find himself in line for a few such concertina comments after this recording does the rounds.

The opening track, The Wrong House, is a tour de force that showcases his incredibly nimble and expressive playing. There are 14 of his original tunes here and two traditionals. Brother Caoimhín (keyboards) and Paul

Meehan (guitars) provide stellar backing and help propel the tunes at quite the pace, and occasionally come to the fore for their own solos. There's also some great slower playing, too, as in the slow jig Farewell to McCarthy's. Buille has been greeted as a classic of new Irish music. I. for one. wholeheartedly agree. Keep it up, Niall, and stay away from the lighter fuel!

- By Tim Readman

Erika Warry Time On Our Hands Independent

I dig Erika's grainy alto, her in-andout-of-perspective songs, delivered with expression. An observant poet, a cliché distorter, a fearless traveller, a band leader - Miss Warry is all of the above, and a competent guitar strummer to boot. One might liken her to a female Al Tuck. Arrangements incorporate brass, pedal steel, stand-up bass, and violin. Songwriter is a rather comical song about, you guessed it, being a songwriter - she takes us from

the bedroom to the stage; "buy the band rounds, charge a dollar or four" - ah, manys an indie songwriter can relate to this. Breathing Techniques is an (autobiographical?) allegory of a girl caught between country and city, and Easter in E Flat is an unlikely love song wherein her lover is a lamb. But these are merely my interpretations - I could be way off. Listen for yourself.

- By Mary Beth Carty

John Mann **December Looms** Independent

John Mann of Spirit of the West has been distracted from music lately by spending his time as an actor in Hollywood North. So it is great to hear he hasn't departed the musical stage for good. Mister Mann is his solo project, and what you get is a return to his alt.folk roots. Just John, a guitar and his trademark gravelly voice perfectly suited to the songs about his Port Town - Vancouver.

A standout on December Looms is My Little Lamb - a song of warning from



New from Corvus Records:

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John Reischman and the Jaybirds know the best new Bluegrass grows from classic roots. Their new CD Stellar Jays has all the elements: hard driving instrumentals, lonesome singing, and an excellent cross section of originals mixed with traditional covers.

-Tim O'Brien

John Reischman approaches the mandolin with unprecedented musicality. On Stellar Jays, a skilfully spirited effort, his concept of tone, sense of melody, and attention to detail continues to astound.

-Chris Thile

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- by les siemieniuk

Brown Ale Windsniffer And Other Assorted Legends

Independent

Initially from
New Brunswick and
Newfoundland but now
living in Mississauga,
ON. Brown Ale
consist of dual multiinstrumentalists Glenn
McFarlane and Les
Smith. Loyal to their
heritage, this pair delves
largely into the Celtic/
Maritime traditions.

Windsniffer consist of a variety of traditional and original instrumentals and songs but there's a great deal of inconsistency here. Smith's majestic, mostly a cappella, treatment of the old war-horse She Moved Through The Fair is the undeniable highlight of this disc. But much of the singing is strained, and very occasionally the playing gets off-kilter (The County Clare Set. The Hammered Geese on the Mountain Set). What Brown Ale really needs is a firm hand in the studio. Having said all that,

the strength of this disc lies in their ability to, er. sniff out a decent song. No rafter-raising clichés here. More to the point, McFarlane proves to be quite a remarkable songwriter, with The Shipbuilding and Windsniffer particularly notable efforts. All in all, not quite a heady brew. this Brown Ale, but with a little more maturity could prove pungent. - By Roddy Campbell

Dy Roddy Cump

Bright Eyes Cassadega Saddle Creek Records

Saddle Creek Records
It hard to believe Conor
Oberst is only 27. A
prolific little bugger
since the mid-'90s,
each release grows with
confidence and energy
and is always generating
surprisingly wonderful
musical nuggets and
lyrical gems.

This time around the Bright Eyes is Conor, Mike Mogis and Nate Woolcott at the core. joined by a host of voices and players including Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, and John McEntire from Tortoise. Musically more cohesive than his previous works, Cassadega still runs from country swagger to loosey goosy just plain fun. It's also not as personal as his earlier work; the themes handled are more big-idea stuff

rather than the everyday diary of a young man.

Cassadega is a
beautifully composed
snapshot of Bushera Americana, with
references to polar bears,
hurricane Katrina and
holy wars. It is a joy to
listen to, even if he goes
over the top every once
in awhile with references
to the Whore of Babylon
and the Great Satan.

Mr. Oberst deserves all the accolades and success that have come his way. As the Who said a long time ago, "The kids are all right."

- by les siemieniuk

Teach Yourself Piano Sweet Waltz, Bitter Waltz

Independent

The songwriting team of Sarah and Kevin Atkinson, with the help of family and friends, are the tutors so to speak of the ensemble called Teach Yourself Piano. Sweet Waltz, Bitter Waltz has a bit of cabaret appeal to it but with more of a piano bar approach. Cute titles: Beer Hall Lament, Kitchen Sink Lothario, Rolling Pin Waltz. Snappy lyrics: "He's Guildenstern to your Rosencrantz, "You can hear the sounds of tubercular phlegm," "Give the people what they want /They'll crucify you every time.'



Recordings

The highlight of the disc is the piano work of Kevin Atkinson. The music bounces, sways, lilts and, yes, even waltzes. Teamed with subtle but effective strings, the disc could almost stand alone as an instrumental piece. Sweet Waltz, Bitter Waltz would not be out of place in a multidisc CD player along side some '40s-era pop, Lionel Hampton-style jazz or classic Willie Nelson of the '70s.

- By Chris Martin

Ranger Creek Wranglers Horse Tales

Here we have the real deal, three Albertan's who are trail riders by day and country singers

by night.

Independent

An upright base and two guitars fuel the dust that these cowboys can kick up. When they need to put it into high gear they have the tools to do so. Bill Wesson, Marc Halun and Bruce Goebel took turns in writing the tracks and they've once again penned some fine trail songs and country ballads. Songs like, Rodeo Time, Mountains They Call Love, Cowboy Blues, and She's The Girl could be the chapter headings for a western novel. Zane Grey, move

- By John Roman

Cousin Harley Hillbilly Madness!

Eastside

Great guitar toetapping licks! Cousin Harley, a three-piece rockabilly and roots band from Western Canada, with their second release. Hillbilly Madness, has produced one hell of a fast-paced, rockin', 15track fever-filled album that might make the

dead dance.

Paul Piquot, a.k.a. Cousin Harley, showcases some amazing guitar playing and is backed by a strong band with Pete Turland on upright bass and Jess Cahill on drums. All in all, no madness here, just a lot of fun!

- By Philip Harries

Steve Ashley Live in Concert- March

Dusk Fire

Steve Ashley is a veteran of Ashlev Hutchings's legendary Albion Band, and a contemporary of Nick Drake, Fairport Convention and many others from the golden age of English folk-rock. This live recording is a celebration of a long and illustrious career and of his 60th birthday. More than 30 musicians gathered together to showcase the highlights of Ashley's 40-odd years as a songwriter; and what a lineup it is. Among the star-studded cast are Dave Pegg. Phil Beer, Simon Nicol, Chris Leslie, Maartin Allcock and Dick Cadbury. The brilliant string arrangements are provided by Robert Kirby. Ashley himself is in fine form, singing and playing up a storm and supplying all the material from his own pen. A lovely recording and a fine performance captured for posterity. - By Tim Readman

Todd Butler Idle Canadian

heard him. He's a

Independent

There are a whole lot of musicians who try to be funny, but not many comedians who can play guitar like Todd Butler. If you've ever listened to CBC Radio you've

regular on the comedy show as Madly Off In All Directions.

But with this selfproduced album on which he does just about everything himself, he wants to be taken seriously as a musician. Like the late Rodney Dangerfield, all he wants is a little respect.

Well, he's earned it. This country boy can sure play, both acoustic and electric. The notes come out faster than the one-liners at a comedy club. And he can write a pretty moving song, whether it's about getting back home to his Alberta rural roots (Home) or the craziness that's consuming America in A Fine Line.

He didn't leave his sense of humour at the door. He takes on politicians (Bushed and Dicked Around) and Lord Conrad Black of Crossharbour, and my favourite, Dad, which is poignant and funny at the same time.

- By Mike Sadava

James McMurtry Best of the Sugar Hill Years

Sugar Hill

In between his early recordings for Columbia and his recent ones for Compadre, McMurtry released three albums for Sugar Hill (1997-2002). This retrospective draws more or less equally from all three.

For several decades there has been a steady flow of impressive songwriters coming out of Texas, and this compilation is a reminder that McMurtry deserves a place among the upper echelon of the current crop. His music is hard-edged while his lyrics are socially astute and highly



literate, as one would expect from Larry McMurtry's son.

The album closes with the sordid tale of Choctaw Bingo, an eight-minute epic that serves as the compilation's pièce de résistance. Two out of the three Sugar Hill albums were produced by Lloyd Maines, one of the most consistent producers around for this kind of artist. Those who missed out the first time around shouldn't hesitate to play catch-up with this

- By Paul-Emile Comeau

Chrissy Crowley Chrissy Crowley

Offshore Gael Music

Here comes the latest young Celtic musician to emerge from Cape Breton, NS. Chrissy Crowley's credentials are impeccable, being the granddaughter of Newfoundland fiddler Bill Crowley and Cape Breton fiddler Archie Neil Chisholm. She is actively involved in the music of the

island at all sorts of levels: playing, learning, teaching and performing, and is rapidly gaining a fearsome reputation among the cognoscenti of Celtic fiddling. Her playing is fiery and has a distinctly mischievous personality. She has soaked up the influences of her Newfoundland-Scottish heritage and is now pouring out music like there's no tomorrow. Her accompanying musicians include Gordie Sampson on guitar and Troy MacGillivray on piano. What do they feed them on out there in Margaree, Cape Breton? Whatever it is, I want some!

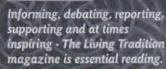
- By Tim Readman

Shawn Lidster Legends on the Baccalieu Trail Independent

Shawn Lidster is a singer-songwriter from Brigus, NL. For this project he has researched the history



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Recordings

of the towns of the Baccalieu Trail on the Avalon Peninsula, including Cupids, Brigus, Bull Cove, Harbour Grace and Carbonear, Carbonear Island tells the story of how the people of Carbonear defended themselves from the French invasion in 1696. The Kyle is all about how important this old cargo supply ship was to the people of the Rock. John Hawe The Pirate recounts the tale of the capture of this seaman and his conversion into a member of the pirate crew. There are six songs in all and then two bonus tracks from previous Lidster recordings. All very tuneful, if a little lightweight in places. - By Tim Readman

Kate Reid Comin' Alive Independent

Kate, get someone to redesign your album cover. It screams amateur! You deserve better! The first two tracks, Starving Artist and I'd Go Straight For Ridley Bent, are duds she tries for laughs but is too literal, too "I am a dyke, I have attitude, I am a singer-songwriter". OK! We know!

The rest of the album is actually very impressive. Heal Myself, Bright Out Here, and Identity are introspective and universal numbers with marvellous harmonies. Kori Miyanishi adds some expert banjo and fiddle tracks, and a rhythm section allows Kate to rock out like she should. Everyone's Fucked But Me, Small Town, and Coop Girlz are just clever and twisted enough to draw chuckles. In the epic Crone Woman, she muses on becoming elderly and wise. Great

lyrics there, and her voice is always in tune, maybe sometimes even a bit Rae Spoon-esque. She could go far with a producer with good taste.

By Mary Beth Carty

Amelia Curran War Brides Independent

War Brides plays like an early Leonard Cohen album. Each song is a heart-wrenching gem that will make you feel nostalgic about bittersweet moments that may never have been. My heart can't help but ache and my vocal chords sing along.

Originally from Newfoundland but now residing in Halifax, Amelia is a dark-souled girl; there is a covert sombreness even on major-key country-esque numbers like You Won't Find Me and Just a Tuesday.

Phil Sedore recorded the album in his home studio and plays a panoply of instruments including cello, mandolin, accordion and trombone. Judging from the cover, this CD has been produced on a small budget - but a good song is a good song and money can't change that.

- By Mary Beth Carty

Mariza Concerto em Lisboa Times Square Records

The stately, melancholic sounds of fado, Portugal's distinctive urban folk music, haven't been taken up as widely as other Latinate music. partly because its practitioners tend to treat it with a reverence that precludes tarting it up with programmed beats and other worldmusic influences. Once the rest of the world does catch on to fado. Mariza is a cinch to become its biggest star.

Captured in concert in 2005 with the Sinfonietta de Lisboa behind her, Mariza displays the powerful pipes, supple phrasing and piercing sadness earned through a lifelong devotion to the form's traditions. Better vet, the CD comes bundled with a an hour-long documentary, Mariza and the Story of Fado, which provides historical context, gorgeous footage of Lisbon, and a tour of some of the city's fado bars, where you get to hear Mariza and other fado singers in appropriately intimate settings.

- By Scott Lingley

Great Big Sea Courage Patience and Grit

Warner Music "Hello, we are Great Big Sea and we're from the tropical Island of Newfoundland," announce GBS's Alan Doyle, and then we are off on a musical ride that will keep you moving and singing along all the way through this concert.

Recorded at Belleville, ON, at the Empire Theatre in June 2006 during their The Hard and The Easy tour; this DVD features a set of acoustic folk material following by a more pop-oriented set with drums and bass and electric instruments. As well as that, there's four music videos: Captain Kidd, When I Am King, Lukey and Shines Right Through Me.

And if that wasn't enough, there's a 22track audio CD version of the two-hour concert included as well. There are also songs from The Hard and The Easy such as The River Driver and Concerning Charlie Horse

alongside concert favourites such as Mari-Mac, Excursion Around the Bay and Ordinary Day. This is a feast for fans of GBS. Snap one up now!

- By Tim Readman

Book Review

Strange But True Victorian Songhunters The Recovery and Editing of English Vernacular Ballads and Folk Lyrics, 1820-1883 By E. David Gregory Scarecrow Press

David Gregory is associate professor of history and humanities at Athabasca University in Alberta. Victorian Songhunters is a history of English popular song collecting and includes an account of Victorian vernacular song leading up to the Edwardian folksong revival.

This is no little paperback you can shove in your pocket. No, this is a veritable weighty tome, a scholarly work of some

magnitude. Gregory starts by defining his terms, including what he means by popular song, vernacular song, fake songs and folk songs. He then delves into the history of song collecting, and chronicles the gradual realization that there was money to be made from compiling these songs into printed form, for sale to the public.

He profiles great collectors such as William Chappell and Francis Child and critiques their approach in terms of scholarly integrity and historical accuracy. He laments the fact that many of the lyrics have become separated from the tunes that accompany them. He features many examples of songs from these collections to illustrate his points along the way.

This is an excellent resource and a fascinating insight into 63 crucial years in the history of English (and some Scottish) song collecting.

- By Tim Readman



Bottle This!

By Evalyn Parry

Just hold on before we go any farther -- I want to take a moment to talk about water.

That liquid that you're holding, that bottle in your hand,

you though it was water you were drinking, not a corporate brand.

You thought it was cleaner and safer, and better for your health,

but were you thinking about who profits from the wealth

of the public water that's been taken for free

and sold back to you for an exorbitant fee?

Listen my friends, listen up folks: Aquafina is Pepsi. Dansani is Coke. They're selling filtered tap water and this

is not a joke.
These corporate giants buy tap water at a tax-free-super-discount, filter it five times, then sell it back to you for five thousand times the amount

for five thousand times the amount you pay for running water from your tap, and when I start thinking about that, my blood starts to boil, my head starts to

as I try to understand where to begin.

That H20, the bottle you just tossed, it represents garbage, safety and cost, and water table depletion, which is all our of loss.

Let's talk about land-fill: plastic bottles piled high

slowly decomposing, leaching toxins back into our water supply.

Furthermore, the more water bottles we buy.

the more we send a signal to the powers that be

that we believe the fear that they're selling us about water safety.

selling us about water safety.

We're swallowing the idea that good water isn't free.

that of course one must pay for water of

Meanwhile, beyond the periphery of our rich country

(where, incidentally, tap water is actually tested far more stringently and regularly than bottled water) women walk farther

and farther to find water for their families,

a desert spreading rapidly, while we sit sipping on a billion dollar industry

They say "water is the new oil!" Water is the new oil! And Canada's got it, so this war will come to our soil.

Beroil is a lexury; water a necessity. We'd fighting over oil 'cause we like to drive cars,

'cause trucks must deliver, 'cause we want to fly to mars.
But a body can only live without water

for so long.

Water should not belong to anyone. Water belongs to everyone.

Water must be public,

water must be free.

clean water should not be a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market, which pits those who can afford it against those in need.

Water is a human right, not a luxury. Water is a human right, not a luxury. You gotta think

about what you drink.

Think! Think about what you drink.

Let's talk about India, let's talk about Africa

let's talk about China...or right here, in North America.

Let's talk about the watersheds and aquafirs,

let's talk about Walkerton and Native reserves.

This matter is urgent, it requires our

it demands immediate public intervention. If we're going to be paying, it should be for water from our tap,

ensuring it remains reliable, clean and safe, so that

we can take a container, fill it again and again,

fill our bodies with the water we need and then

leave enough for our neighbours, enough for the farmers

enough for the future, our sons and our daughters.

It's the blood of the earth in that bottle right there,

a resource we have no choice but to share.

Before you buy another bottle and down what's in there you've gotta think

about what you drink.

Think! Think about what you drink.

So maybe I'm preaching to the choir, to the converted masses, the concerned and the conscious, the educated classes.

But even you out there, who already know everything I've said,

how many times does convenience win out instead

of what you know is right, and what you know you should do?

You know ignoring the facts doesn't make them less true.

You've gotta think

about what you drink. Think! Think about what you drink. Tell your friend, tell your neighbour, write a letter to your leader it is never true that there is nothing you can do:

you can think about what you drink. Think! Think about what you drink.

Water must be public, water must be free, clean water is a human right, not a luxury. Think about what you drink. Think! Think about what you drink.



The Scottish folk singer Dick Gaughan once said that for every thousand songwriters, you needed a thousand interpreters; otherwise, when the writer of the song dies, the song dies along with them. To encourage the interpretation of great songs, Penguin Eggs publishes one each issue. This time around, we've taken a different tact; we offer Evalyn Parry's powerful spoken word piece, Bottle This! It needs no instruments other than creative percussion and can be found on her stirring latest release Small Theatres on Borealis Records. Massive thanks to Evalyn for very kindly allowing us to reprint it here. The following text explains why she wrote it:

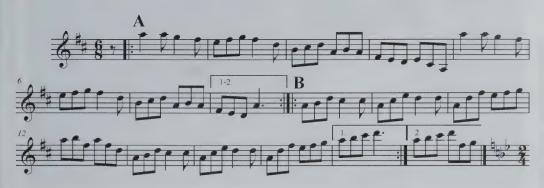
"For a long time I've thought buying water in bottles seemed like a crazy scam. A classic case of the public being sold something that we truly don't need – but so cleverly marketed that we all start to believe we do need it.

In the last few years, I'd been starting to hear a lot of stuff about how plastic containers leach hormone-disrupting chemicals, and about the connections between plastics and breast cancer.

Then last summer, I had a conversation with a friend of mine who works with KAIROS, an ecumenical social justice group who launched a huge campaign about bottled water. Hearing the facts from her motivated me go do a bunch of my own research...and then it didn't take long before my outrage turned into some rhymes." – E. P.

Hommage à Paul Bacon

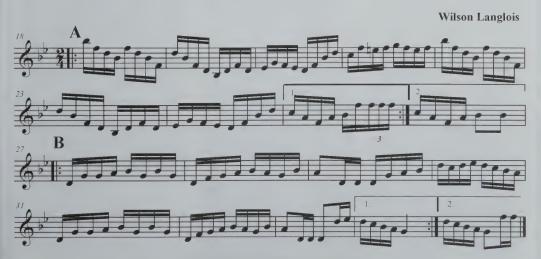
Philippe Bruneau



La première pièce est une composition de l'accordéoniste Philippe Bruneau. Vous pouvez facilement jouer la deuxième partie un octave plus bas. La seconde me vient d'un violoneux du New-Hampshire qui s'appelait Wilson Langlois. Il me reste toujours à déterminer si la pièce est trad ou une des siennes.

The first tune was composed by accordion player Philippe Bruneau. You can easily play the second part one octave lower if it suits your playing better. The second one comes from the late New-Hampshire fiddler Wilson Langlois. I still have to determine if it is truly one of his own or a traditional tune.

le rapide à Wilson



Pascal Gemme||http://tradquebec.over-blog.com/

LE QUARTIER FRANÇAIS



Ou'oud donc!

La collaboration du combo klezmer Shtreiml et du joueur de oud d'origine turque Ismail Fencioglu nous a donné Fenci's Blues. Mary Beth Carty pose la question à cent piastres : et ça danse du ventre en ligne?

J'essavais de m'imaginer comment peut se sentir un harmoniciste du calibre de Jason Rosenblatt lorsqu'il entend un musicien de rue qui gratte sa guitare en s'époumonant sur un harmonica faux. «Je ne m'en fais pas avec ça», dit-il. La seule chose qui m'embête réellement c'est quand quelqu'un me demande : 'Peux-tu en jouer comme Bob Dylan, Neil Young, ou Bruce Springstein? Je me dis que c'est justement ce je veux éviter!»

Jason est membre fondateur du groupe klezmer montréalais Shtreiml, qui a sorti récemment un troisième album renversant, l'oeuvre d'une collaboration avec Ismail Fencioglu, chanteur, joueur de oud et directeur de chorale d'origine turque. Shtreiml et Monsieur Fencioglu se sont connus au Festival du Monde Arabe lorsque les organisateurs les ont invités en 2004 à monter un collectif réunissant la musique du Moyen-Orient et la musique juive d'Europe de l'Est. "Nous avons été présentés et ça a cliqué aussitôt. Nous souhaitions que ça devienne plus qu'un événement ponctuel. Depuis, il n'y a pas un concert où Ismail n'a pas joué avec nous, sauf ceux que nous avons donnés aux États-Unis - c'était juste trop compliqué pour lui d'obtenir un visa." Ismail est bien davantage qu'un musicien invité sur le cd - il est membre du groupe à part entière.

Comme point d'aboutissement de deux années de collaboration, le groupe a produit Fenci's Blues, qui réunit le oud et l'harmonica, deux traditions musicales, et du matériel original qui se prête bien aux deux styles. Ma piste favorite, la pièce traditionnelle turque Beyoglunda Gezersin, comporte une performance vocale au son méditerranéen riche et inimitable avec des solos d'harmonica blues - ca sonne comme une rencontre entre le country et l'Arabie. Une danse du ventre en two-step? Oh, que oui! "Nous prétendons en farce que ça vient des montagnes Blue Ridge de Turquie,' raconte Jason. "Le premier instrument d'Ismail est la mandoline. Il joue le oud dans un style non traditionnel - il sonne vraiment bluegrass quand il en joue.

Tandis qu'Ismail est un musicien traditionnel formé, heureux d'intégrer des influences extérieures, Jason fit un apprentissage tardif de la musique traditionnelle klezmer. Dans sa jeunesse, il chante la musique liturgique à la Synagogue et suit des leçons de piano, mais ses premières influences lui viennent du jazz américain, du rock et du blues. Lorsqu'il débute l'apprentissage de l'harmonica, sa mère lui fait entendre Sonny Terry et Brownie McGee, puis quand il se dirige vers le blues électrique, elle lui fait découvrir un long jeu du Paul Butterfiel Blues Band. Puis il découvre John Popper de Blues Explosion, et l'ancien harmoniciste de Flektones, Howard Levy. "Quand j'ai entendu Howard Levy en concert, j'ai été sidéré par ce qu'il faisait," explique Jason. "Il avait la dextérité d'un joueur de saxophone sur l'harmonica. Je me suis arrangé un cours privé avec lui - ce qui était censé n'être une leçon d'une heure s'est prolongé pour se terminer trois heures plus tard.

Howard Levy est un pionnier de l'harmonica de renom. "Un harmonica diatonique, un Marine Band, comme celui que je joue, c'est comme un piano sans touches noires. Mais Howard, s'est obstiné à croire qu'il pourrait sortir toutes les notes de la gamme chromatique de cet instrument, et par essai erreur, il a développé une technique de jeu chromatique." Jason a recu une bourse du Conseil canadien pour étudier un mois avec Howard. Ils se lièrent d'amitié et Howard est même allé jouer au mariage de Jason en 2004.

Ce qui m'amène à Rachel Lemisch - tromboniste de Shtreiml et épouse de Jason. Aux yeux de Jason, il n'y a que des avantages à avoir sa partenaire dans le groupe. "Quand nous sommes en tournée nous ne nous ennuyons pas l'un de l'autre parce que nous sommes ensemble et on ne se dispute pas pour savoir qui prendra la voiture quand vient le temps d'aller pratiquer." Rachel's Bulgare, une pièce que Jason a composé pour elle, parait sur Fenci's Blues.

Rachel et Jason, ainsi que les autres membres de Shtreiml, se sont rencontrés au KlezKanada un mois d'août. Un programme exceptionnel d'une semaine qui regroupe tout ce qui a trait au klezmer sous forme d'ateliers - une panoplie d'instruments, théâtre, Hébreu - même le mélange du hip-hop et du klezmer, un cours d'ailleurs offert par l'ancien accordéoniste de Shtreiml. "C'est toute une rafale d'activités" dit Jason. "Les sessions durent jusqu'à quatre heure du matin et parfois plus tard, ou plus tôt, selon le point de vue." Les gens y viennent de partout dans le monde - d'aussi loin que la Russie et le Brésil - pour étudier au camp en périphérie de Montréal, souvent grâce à des bourses offertes par KlezKanada.

Après l'avoir entendu jouer du

LE QUARTIER FRANÇAIS

répertoire traditionnel klezmer sur l'harmonica, les autres participants du KlezKananda ont commencé à l'achaler pour qu'il se démarre un groupe personne ne jouait de ce style de musique à l'harmonica, "Nous avons commencé à jouer dans les clubs de Montréal et le public a commencé à venir nous entendre - nous étions surpris! Nous avons joué au Festival klezmer de Vienne, à Krakow, en tournée bulgare pour les communautés juives de là-bas. Nous étions très reconnaissants du succès en tournée nous ne faisions pas beaucoup d'argent, mais nous jouions. Il n'y a pas beaucoup de groupes qui peuvent repayer toutes leurs dépenses d'une tournée en Europe à leur première ou deuxième année!"

Le coup de pouce de KlezKanada n'a pas seulement suscité la formation de Shtreiml, mais aussi l'implication personnelle de Jason dans la musique klezmer. Avant cette expérience, Jason ne joue que des interprétations avec ses copains en musique à McGill, et se joint à The Moshav, groupe folk-rock israélien, lorsqu'il vit en Israël pour quatre ans. En Israël, il étudie à l'Université Remon, une école affiliée à Berkley. "Ce fut une expérience musicale inoubliable. Les commodités étaient misérables - on étudiait dans l'équivalent de roulottes et, tous les matins, on pouvait voir un âne se promener sur le campus. Mais le calibre des professeurs et des étudiants était très élevé."

Étudiant en Israël, Jason constate qu'une grande distinction est faite entre les juifs orthodoxes et séculiers en Israël, et tout spécialement parmi les artistes. "J'ai grandi orthodoxe - j'étais l'un des rares à porter la kippa sur ma tête à l'Université. Ils ne savaient pas comment m'aborder. Ça fait peut être quétaine, mais j'imagine que la musique m'a permis de passer outre cette barrière."

vu le thème général de cet album – le mariage entre les sons juifs et arabes – est qu'il s'agit vraiment d'une production canadienne unique. Jason ajoute à ce propos : "Je ne crois pas que ç'aurait pu être fait en Turquie ou en Israël. Premièrement, nous avons reçu un support phénoménal du Conseil des arts du Canada pour créer cet album. J'ai beaucoup d'amis musiciens à New

L'idée qui m'est venue lorsque j'ai

York, et il n'y a aucun moyen pour eux de recevoir du financement pour créer un album comme celui là.

En cherchant des liens entre les deux styles, Ismail et Shtreiml intégrèrent une chansons traditionnelle controversée, d'une certaine manière, comme piste cachée - elle a la même mélodie que Rasputin, de Bony M, ce sur quoi je l'ai interrogé. "Cette chanson est commune à différentes cultures. En fait, c'est le sujet d'un film qui s'intitule Whose song is this? où une femme de Bulgarie se déplace d'une région à l'autre entre la Grèce, la Bulgarie, la Turquie, la Serbie, la Croatie, l'Albanie - chacune de ces cultures ayant sa version de cette chanson et des paroles différentes. Les paroles sont souvent évocatrices des spécificités de ces sociétés. C'est une chanson intéressante - c'est aussi chanté dans la liturgie juive. Ismail est convaincu qu'elle fut écrite par un juif de Turquie, mais si vous raconter cela à un Grec, il s'écriera : 'Non, c'est une chansons grecque!'"

Chanteuses culottées

Dans la lignée des Charbonniers de l'Enfer, les cinq chanteuses de Galant tu perds ton temps nous ramènent dans une tradition de chanson où l'humour va de paire avec les doubles sens grivois. Tony Montague leur tend l'oreille.

Il est un peu passé 10h30 un dimanche matin, temps où la plupart des musiciens sont encore couchés ou rampent avec peine à leur cafetière. Mais au Festival du Bois, à Coquitlam en Colombie-Britannique, la fête bat son plein alors que les cinq filles de Galant tu perds ton temps nous font sentir comme si le grand chapiteau était devenu une salle paroissiale villageoise du Québec.

Une chanson satyrique sur les plaisirs douteux du mariage est suivie par une complainte à propos d'un mari si petit qu'il aurait disparu sous les draps puis rôti dans son lit en feu. Une autre raconte l'histoire d'un prêtre porté sur la chose recevant la réponse d'une fille impudente. Galant insuffle une nouvelle vie aux chansons des

femmes du Québec rural.

Le groupe a cappella a du caractère et une arrogance qui séduit. Pour personnifier l'idée de leur nom de groupe, les filles ont un homme à leur suite pour leur section rythmique. Jean-François Berthiaume est peut être celui qui travaille le plus fort de tous les musiciens accompagnateurs canadiens. Il rempli plusieurs tâches pour Galant - en dansant la gigue, tapant des pieds, battant le tambour à mailloche, claquant les os et les cuillères pour soutenir les chansons.

Et ce qu'on attend de l'hirsute cavalier ne s'arrête pas là. "Il porte tous nos sacs et valises pour nous, tout en nous tenant les portes", révèle Josiane Hébert, directrice musicale et co-fondatrice de Galant. "Et. bien sûr, il fournit un attrait visuel. Comme numéro spécial il joue sur sa valise de transport d'instruments et la fait sonner pareil à une caisse claire. Jean-François est avec nous depuis 4 ans, et il est bien élevé à présent", dit-elle en riant.

Galant vit le jour au début 2003 quand Josiane et sa copine de longue date Mia Lacroix décidèrent qu'il était temps d'entreprendre un projet de musique ensemble. "Nous baignions dans la tradition folk, et avons remarqué qu'il y avait peu de groupes de femmes. Nous avons conclu qu'il serait bon d'en partir un."

"Bien que nous soyons toutes deux instrumentistes - Mia joue de la flûte et je joue du piano et de l'accordéon - nous tenions à le faire a cappella, pas juste parce que nous aimons la voix humaine, mais parce que les mots sortent plus clairement de cette manière. Il y a tellement d'excellentes histoires et beaucoup de belle poésie dans ces vieilles chansons."



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Josiane et Mia, toutes deux sopranos, enrôlèrent trois autres filles qu'ils connaissaient - Jacinthe Dubé (ténor), Évelyne Gélinas (alto), et Patricia Beausoleil (basse) - pour créer un son plein et largement coloré. Le quintet se réunissait les dimanches midis dans la cuisine pour échanger et apprendre les chansons qu'elles connaissaient et créer leurs harmonies et de subtils arrangements.

Ils visaient particulièrement un répertoire pour et par les femmes, qui donne un point de vue, une perspective féminine. "Souvent, ces chansons furent négligées, ou chantées par des hommes. Nous voulions nous les réapproprier. Dans la société traditionnelle, les femmes chantaient dans les maisons en travaillant, filant, cousant, préparant les repas, ou autre. Elles le faisaient rarement lors de rassemblements par contre - bien qu'elles aient souvent soufflé les mots aux hommes qui les oubliaient!"

À leur session de musique hebdomadaire les filles connurent un tel entrain qu'elles eurent bientôt envie de performer en public. "Mais nous avions besoin d'un accompagnement rythmique, après avoir découvert que ce n'est pas facile de taper des pieds en chantant en même temps! C'est là que nous sommes allées chercher Jean-François."

Berthiaume avait déjà joué avec Entourloupe et Réveillons!, et voyagé à plusieurs reprises en Irlande pour perfectionner son jeu de bodhràn. Sa finesse rythmique et son adresse de gigueur justifient tout l'intérêt de son addition au groupe.

À l'été 2003, tous n'en avaient qu'après elles sur la scène traditionnelle québécoise, spécialement depuis leur apparition au Festival Mémoire et racines de Lanaudière, le coeur de la musique traditionnelle québécoise.

"Nous avions perdu la tradition des gens de la campagne qui chantent en harmonies comme nous, à part dans les églises. Quand ils chantent les refrains des vieilles chansons, c'est à l'unisson. Puis des groupes dans les années 70 comme la Bottine Souriante ont commencé à élaborer des parties vocales. Il y a dix ans, les Charbonniers de l'enfer étaient formés. Naturellement, nous nous sommes inspirées d'eux, et ils sont devenus de bons amis."

Le premier disque de Galant, intitulé Fais-toi pas d'illusions, fut produit par André Marchand, un des Charbonniers, en 2005. Les 19 chansons de l'album vont de la mélancolie des adieux à la vie de célibat de "Adieu la Liberté", au drôle et fantastique "Quand j'étais fille à marier" dans laquelle la chanteuse répète d'un ton entraînant "entre 20 et 30"

amoureux dans sa chambre à minuit!

"Notre répertoire nous vient d'une variété de sources - des amis, de vieux albums, des recherches aux archives, et dans nos familles. Ma grand-mère maternelle ...velina Provencher connaissait bien des chansons, et elle a transcrit dans son enfance des textes de chansons qu'elle avait entendues de son grand-père et de sa grand-mère. Elle m'a donné ses cahiers il y a quelques années quand j'ai eu 18 ans et qu'elle en avait 90."

Les chansons de Galant peuvent sonner étonnamment modernes. "Maman j'ai 14 ans" est un dialogue entre une fille qui veut se marier à son gré et sa mère qui la gronde. La fille l'accuse alors d'hypocrisie arguant que sa mère fréquentait déjà son père à cet âge. La fille s'est trouvée un homme bien appris qui lui parle si poliment qu'elle le compare à un professeur d'école."

D'autres chansons son moins évidentes mais riches de leur double sens, tel que "Un métier pour faire la toile" l'outrageuse dénonciation d'une jeune mariée qui découvre que son mari n'a pas l'habilité de faire les draps de leur lit de mariage

"Dans la société traditionnelle l'amour et la sexualité étaient considérés comme des sujets tabous. Personne n'était censé parler de sa nuit de mariage. Des chansons comme celles-là servaient à relâcher les émotions refoulées..."

Avec le choix et l'ampleur de leur matériel, des arrangements fignolés, et des voix d'une expressivité délicieuse, Galant - avec l'infatigable Berthiaume - s'est taillé une place unique et d'influence sur la scène folk du Québec. Et ils commenceront à rejoindre les publics étrangers.

"On s'entend vraiment bien et je pense que ça paraît," dit Josiane. "Au début de l'année, Patricia a quitté et nous avons recruté Isabelle Payette, qui cadre dans l'équipe à merveille - le Festival du Bois était son premier spectacle avec nous. En ce moment, nous travaillons sur un deuxième album, et nous avons plus de concerts en dehors du Québec. On aime tellement les vieilles chansons. Elles ont de l'esprit et sont intelligemment composées, et si plaisantes à chanter - et nous sommes enthousiastes de les faire voyager.»

Les Chauffeurs à Pieds Au Studio Des Trois Lits

Disques Scorbut

Le cinquième des Chauffeurs est une sorte de retraite par rapport au genre «Québecois» de leurs précédents albums. Pour une raison : il est tout instrumental. Les chansons ayant été jusqu'ici le point de mire du groupe, la sortie d'un enregistrement exclusivement instrumental peut sembler étrange de prime abord. En outre, on n'y trouve aucune trace de l'instrumentation inusitée et des arrangements exotiques auxquels le groupe nous avait habitué. Une piste au cor français de Benoît Fortier, un banjo sur le Buck-reel de Cascapédia, mais rien de particulier qui sorte de l'ordinaire. Ceci étant dit, l'album réussi pleinement son objectif de présenter la musique traditionnelle du Québec en ensemble intime, laissant les airs à nu. Comme sur Inné Amárach de Téada (un autre album entièrement instrumental), la finesse du jeu et de la réalisation donne l'équilibre nécessaire entre l'expression individuelle et la tradition, ce qui est à l'avantage d'une écoute attentive autant que d'une réaction physique (la danse). Alors que Au studio des trois lits n'est peut-être pas ce que nous attendions des Chauffeurs, ce disque a néanmoins beaucoup de mérite.

-Par Richard Thornley



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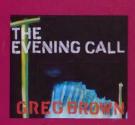
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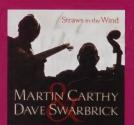
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